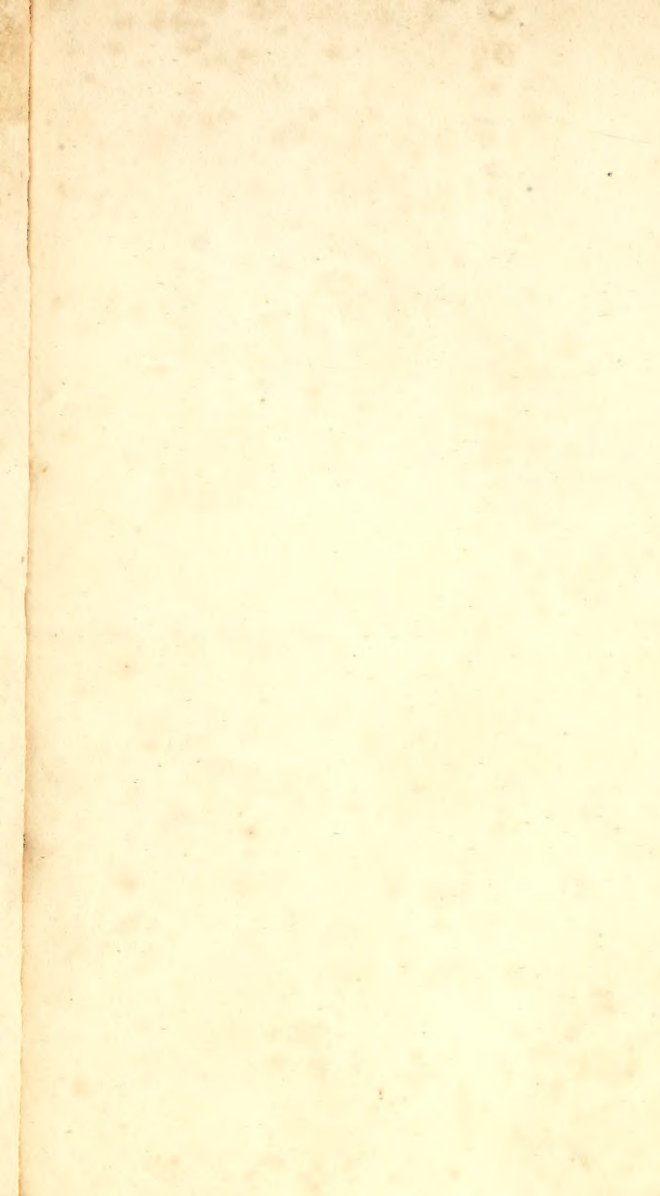


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J O A N !!!

A

NOVEL.

BY

MATILDA FITZJOHN.

You have no great pretensions to wit or sprightliness of genius.—I grant it.

MARC. ANTONIN.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR HOOKHAM AND CARPENTER,
OLD BOND STREET.

1796.

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HAROLD ANDERSON

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J O A N!!!

CHAP. I.

THE evening of Lady Cottisbrooke's ball arrived; and a very large and a very elegant party were present to do honor to Lady Almerina, who, with somewhat less condescension than a crowned head would have thought befitting, received the congratulations of the company, suiting her replies exactly to the rank of those who addressed her. About two thirds of the number had been at Mrs. Haccombe's last great rout; and the Miss Affingtons, who knew no joy equal to the mortifying the saucy Lady Morays, had so far exerted their influence, that not only those who had seen their reprehensible deportment towards

Peregrina, but many of the first rank who knew neither the one nor the other party, had adopted the simple Greek head-dress, and one ostrich feather ; and it being more generally becoming than most popular fashions, the few who had it not, felt behind-hand with the world. Mrs. Hacombe, who always transplanted to her own person the embellishments she saw succeed on others, but with additions and improvements of her own, was of the Grecian party ; but she could not confine herself to the single feather, nor the simple hue : she had a forest of various colored plumage, the stems of which were covered with diamonds, pearls, and gold. She was, beyond all competition, the finest in the room ; but Peregrina could not forbear, in the natural love we all bear to our own creations, thinking her simple fashion was spoiled in decorating.

The Lady Morays, with their anxious chaperon, were amongst the last that entered ;

entered ; and dresses were tucked up, and the lines were forming for country dances, when they came in. The universality of the fashion struck them ; and, before they could notice those they came to do honor to, they had faced about to each other to express their dismay. They were forced to digest it hastily ; for Lady Cottisbrooke, who if she had heard of their folly did not chuse to notice it, came forward to meet them, and stopped the music till they should have taken their places, either in the dance or in the adjoining card-room, whither Lady Kerbell, who passionately loved cards and was uncommonly successful, would gladly have retreated, could she have disposed of her tall daughters ; but they, using the privilege of their uncommon height, were looking over the heads of the company, in hope of spying unengaged beaus.

They all three, in no very good humor, sat down at the lower end of the room,

watching the door in hopes of recruits ; for the number of *walking gentlemen* appeared small ; and they themselves, though bowed at distantly, found no one even to chat with them. A marquis, at whom half the right honorable damsels shot their arrows, was standing up with Lady Almerina Delaford ; and when he began to amuse the time of waiting by fine speeches on the super-celestial bliss this anniversary recorded, her ladyship sighed, and thought how idle were long engagements. Lord Surcheester, whom, on such an emergency, Lady Kerbell would not have refused, was hand in hand with Mrs. Haccombe. Lady Effex Courtland had been consigned to the marquis's very young brother. The Miss Affingtons had each dignified partners. Even Mrs. Barnby, and Mrs. Hammond with her apricot complexion, had partners. Peregrina, indeed, did not appear to have drawn a prize in this lottery ; for she was hemmed in by the Miss Affingtons and their party, who were in high gossip. This

was

was some comfort to the Lady Morays; and Mr. Haccombe, Sir Edward Bergholt, and Hamilton Courtland, coming from the card-room, their fears were dissipated; they put their fans in their pockets, stood up, and having adjusted their dress, waited only to be asked.

But Mr. Haccombe alone advancing, each of the young ladies beckoned the man she considered as her own; and while the nabob was, in the style of his parliamentary orations, observing to the countess that his, *you see*, dancing days were over, excepting indeed that disagreeable dance at court which his situation compelled him to, Lady Grace questioned the mad baronet, in the style of *Edward*, *don't you dance to-night?*

Yes, if I can find any partner but you! —was his answer, as he turned away.

Lady Susan, less authoritative, said in a lower tone to Captain Courtland, "So, you have kept yourself disengaged?—We were so late, I thought we should never get here: do you know the hair-dresser did not come till six; and then you know there's three of us, so it makes it so late!—But do you dance this dance?"

"Yes, I do," replied Hamilton coloring, and playing with his watch-chain:—"I am engaged to Miss Lamorne."

The mortification was now complete, and the party were ready to quarrel amongst themselves; for Lady Kerbell wished to be gone, and yet thought it right to stay with her daughters, whom, notwithstanding their small chance of dancing, she could not prevail on to play at cards: they sat in every body's way, for the pleasure of saying ill-natured things within hearing, and distressed Lady Cottisbrooke extremely, by shewing her that the prejudice against them was too great

great for her to overcome it, by inviting any of the elder gentlemen to take them.

The change of partners producing them no better fortune, they all decamped, but not till they had repaid themselves abundantly for their vexations of dress and neglect. Despicable as they were, they had it in their power to make themselves feared ; and it was only till the next morning that they forbore setting their tongues to publish what their eyes, their ears, and their proneness to discover evil, had informed them of. They had perceived something more than usual between Lord Surcheſter and Mrs. Haccombe ; and the *doux yeux* of the nabob towards Peregrina, when ſhe had gone down the dance, and he came forward to hope ſhe was not fatigued, had not eſcaped them. Mrs. Barnby, not chuſing to engage in the ſecond dance, had flirted with Sir Edward, whoſe reſerve they made uſe of to increaſe her culpability. In ſhort, they had con-

ceived a plot that pervaded the whole household of Devonshire-place. Part was true—part was false; for they involved the innocent and the guilty.

In a very few days, and when new scenes of pleasure had nearly obliterated the remembrance of Lady Cottisbrooke's ball, there appeared in one or two of the least reputable but most fashionable daily prints, some paragraphs reflecting on the *Greek turbaned caps*, and the *emperor of the east*, with a hint that included, more pointedly, the *emprefs* and the *earl of S——*. Peregrina was the first of the family who saw these libels; but never having had a *Greek* idea of her head-dress, not guessing who the *emperor of the east* could be, and having no natural turn for scandal, she passed over the paragraphs, and hunted for Irish news. Mrs. Barnby was the next who read them; and she, as Mrs. Haccombe had not then left her chamber, without telling Miss Lamorne

Lamorne her intention, carried the papers thither.

When breakfast was ready, the ladies appeared with cloudy countenances, unintelligible to incurious Peregrina.—A note was brought to Mrs. Haccombe:—she went away to answer it.—Mr. Haccombe came in, and asked for the newspapers.—Mrs. Barnby replied, they were not yet come, and trod on Peregrina's foot to keep her silent. Sir Edward, who was present, contradicted her.—She bid him then seek them.—He rang, and asked a servant for them.—The man said, they were not come.—Sir Edward, in a fury, called up another and another servant; but the answer was the same, and he lost all patience. “ They *are* come,” said he: “ I myself have read them; and so have you, and burnt them, to hide your own disgrace.—You know what the *Greeks* and the *Emperor* and *Empress* mean.—I will not live with such an

infernal troop as ye are—no, not another hour !”

Mr. Haccombe, half rising from the table to repress what he supposed only a fit of frenzy, begged Sir Edward to be quiet, and not alarm Miss Lamorne.—“ Miss Lamorne !” he repeated more coolly, and with an ambiguous sneer.—“ *I* alarm Miss Lamorne !—No, Old Dad, it is not *I* who should alarm Miss Lamorne !—She would pity me, could she see the wretch I am.—You leave me scarcely my senses ; but I must endure it, and be patient.—And so,” continued he, gulping down his tea, “ I must be off ; for I intend to have a glorious ride in Hyde-park this morning : and perhaps, Old Dad, you know, I may meet my sweetheart—Hyde-park is a nice place you know, Old Dad, to meet one’s sweetheart !—Good b’ye, ladies !”—Then turning to the piano forte, where Peregrina had just before set up some Scots ballads, he,
with

with infinite taste and the nicest correctness, sung and accompanied the plaintive air of Donald, and left Peregrina with the tears in her eyes, and Mrs. Barnby with new but very ill-founded suspicions in her mind.

Mr. Haccombe imputed all to the state of Sir Edward's mind, and, fortunately for some of his connections, gave no credit to what he said, but lamented the obligation imposed on him by his old friend's will, that this ward should reside in his house till he was of age. Mrs. Haccombe came in, took her breakfast, and then, on a wink from Mrs. Barnby, the aunt and niece retired together, leaving the nabob and Peregrina to a sober tête-à-tête, from which the latter would have withdrawn; but Mr. Haccombe stooped her, by catching her hand as she passed, and asking if she was in a hurry. She said, No; and taking her work-bag from the piano forte, she sat down.

Mr. Haccombe began the conversation. —“ I am fearful my unhappy friend Berg-holt sometimes alarms you.”

She answered, by confessing that she could not yet accustom herself to his oddity, and by expressing her concern for his situation.

“ It is to be sure, it must be owned, a very pitiable one—a very pitiable one indeed ! He will be of age, that is to say, *twenty-five*, next year ; and then, by the strange will of his father, he must marry, and with my consent, or on his following birth-day his whole estate lapses to one of our public hospitals.”

Peregrina joined in thinking this a very strange will. Mr. Haccombe did not tell her that it was a will he himself had dictated, when Sir Edward's father grew so near his end as to be scarcely conscious of what he did. Indeed, this severe clause

was

was not quite of his fabrication : he had contrived it so, as that the valuable estates of the Bergholts should have slid over to the Haccombess ; but the dying baronet had just sense enough to see the virtues of charity. He therefore, being at war with his other relations, named the first public institution he thought on ; and so the will stood.

Fearing, perhaps, that Miss Lamorne's visible sympathy might be followed by inquisitiveness, he attempted to change the subject of his discourse ; but her countenance expressed such pensive interest for the unhappy maniac, that Mr. Haccombe's jealousy was alarmed, and no more delicate way of satisfying himself occurring, he, with a made-up countenance and affected archness, which sat wonderfully well on his Ganges complexion, began to rally her on a supposition that, notwithstanding his derangement, Sir Edward had found a place in her heart.

Not

Not very well pleased at an idea that she thought impeached her prudence, she replied, in a manner that convinced him he was safe and wrong, that, as a fellow-creature suffering under the greatest possible calamity, she from her heart pitied Sir Edward; but that she should suspect herself as far more insane, could she entertain a sentiment for him beyond those of respect and commiseration.

The eastern chief could scarce contain his rapture; for, in the plenitude of his self-conceit, he fancied that the firmness with which she spoke indicated not only her indifference to Sir Edward, but something like a predilection for himself—at least a wish that he should be satisfied he was without a rival. He then entered into a little flattering chit-chat, and ended with his usual offers of liberality, which, as not needing then, she declined.

He

He withdrew to dress for the minister's levee; and Mrs. Barnby, as if waiting his exit, came in immediately, and, with less smile than usual on her countenance, desired Miss Lamorne to be ready to go out with her exactly at one o'clock. It was then about half past eleven; and Peregrina remained alone till the carriage came, when Mrs. Barnby again appeared, and, to her companion's astonishment, was at such a loss whither to go, that she ordered the coachman to drive for an airing to Hampstead. Contrary to her usual custom, she seemed little inclined to talk; and Peregrina willingly gave into her humor.

CHAP. II.

IT was the morning's news-paper that had so mysteriously deranged the family, and sent these two ladies out on their unplotted pilgrimage. Mrs. Barnby, whom Mrs. Haccombe had recently bribed almost wholly to her interest, had seen the dangerous paragraphs, and shewn them instantly to her aunt, who now considered herself as utterly ruined. In the utmost despair, she prophesied that Mr. Haccombe would at least insist on a separation, before it was in her power to secure herself by re-criminating with any prospect of credit; for her own late attentions, bestowed on Peregrina, took from her all hope of impeaching her character: and a separation, under circumstances so much against her, she dreaded; not as reflecting on her morality,

rality,

ality, but as it would, she was certain, deprive her of the eclat she now lived in, and in which her whole happiness was centered. She saw Lord Surcheſter was not to be truſted, for making good to her any loſs ſhe might ſuſtain for his ſake ; and ſhe had nothing but poverty and ignominy before her.

The earl was not at all more eaſy in his mind ; for he had ſeen the libel, and having too frequently paid ſmart-money on ſuch occaſions, to the no ſmall injury of his otherwiſe impaired income, he would inſtantly have refuted the calumny by abſconding : but this violent method did not perfectly ſuit his views ; for he had ſuffered his paſſion for Peregrina to get the empire of his fickle heart, and, while ſhe remained in Devonſhire-place, he wiſhed to have acceſs there. In haſte, therefore, he had diſpatched his truſty valet with a note to Mrs. Haccombe, in which he begged her to admit him, ſoon after one o'clock,

o'clock, to a private audience. He named that hour, because he had fixed it with her husband for meeting him at the Cockpit ; but him he could easily bilk, and would willingly, on an occasion so important to his happiness.

To keep the house clear of observers it was, therefore, that the obliging Mrs. Barnby went out with Peregrina.

Lord Surcheſter had opened the buſineſs with profeſſions of never-dying love, and extreme concern that the *divineſt creature on earth, the only woman that really had it in her power to bleſs mankind*, ſhould, in return for the condeſcending pity ſhe had beſtowed on a paſſion that muſt otherwiſe have hurried him into a precipitate grave, be expoſed to the ill-humour, and perhaps brutality, of a creature ſo deſpicable as her huſband. He talked as if he took it for granted that Mr. Haccombe had ſeen the libel and comprehended it, and as if his
jealouſy,

jealousy, his rage, and his separation of the lovers, must be the necessary consequence ; and to all this his lordship, notwithstanding his fine speeches, quietly talked of submitting : nor would he, perhaps, have been at the trouble of seeking an interview with the lady, had it not been to advise her not to suffer unrevenged, but to insist, when she was compelled to quit her friend, that Mr. Haccombe should dismiss from his house his *protegée* Miss Larmorne.

Mrs. Haccombe, alarmed as she was at first, had, in the time of waiting for Lord Surcheſter, duly conſidered the impending danger ; and her terrors did not increaſe with her inveſtigation. She ſaw, indeed, that her ſituation was critical ; but ſhe had reſources in her cunning that ſhe could rely on : ſhe was convinced ſhe muſt be cautious, but ſhe ſaw no reaſon to deſpair.

Her

Her courage in some measure balked the earl; and by arguments drawn from *prudence*, and supported by *his restless anxiety for her comfort*, he endeavoured to get loose; but finding that impossible, he concerted with her the best means of escaping observation; and, as she was not inclined to give up any of his attendance on her, she was forced to approve of a plan he proposed for her security, though it was far from being agreeable to her: this was, that, for a blind to his views, he should seem, only *seem*, to address himself more particularly than ever to Miss Lamorne.— Having obtained Mrs. Haccombe's promise that she should take no offence at his conduct, which he called the universe to witness nothing but his *devouring passion* for her could induce him thus to alter, he took his leave, that he might be furnished by some other engagement with a due apology to Mr. Haccombe for disappointing him.

On the return of the ladies from their airing, Mrs. Barnby flew to Mrs. Haccombe, who was beginning to dress for the evening. She learnt the accommodation that had been agreed on, not at all to her satisfaction ; for she thought, if Lord Surchester found it necessary to set up a sham mistress in the family, she herself was a much more proper object than Miss Lamorne. She therefore blamed the plan, as likely to irritate Mr. Haccombe by exciting his jealousy, and to bring about his dismissal of Lord Surchester from the house, where, as he had done all the dirty work the nabob at present wanted, his presence would not be much coveted.

Mrs. Barnby was not pleased with Peregrina, for her presumption in being the first object of the earl's recollection. Mrs. Haccombe was angry with her, because she was to enjoy a few of those smiles and falsehoods she thought herself exclusively entitled to from her lover ; and the two ladies

ladies sat down to dinner completely out of humor : but the aunt's interests made her disguise it, by extraordinary civility to her husband ; and the niece, who saw the drift of her cringing, and knew her ascendancy, feared displeasing her or offending Peregrina, either of which misfortunes might have ruined her farther schemes. Mr. Haccombe appeared to be ignorant of what had so alarmed them ; and Sir Edward, with a contracted brow and a scrutinizing eye, ate his dinner in silence, and departed.

They all met again at a superb private concert, where the usual circle of their friends greeted them. The Lady Morays, without their mama, came to see the effect of their wit, and were loud in their unintelligible titter when they saw Miss Lamorne, whom the alteration they had procured her had rendered a little vain, dressed *a la Grecque*. Had she known the pointed sarcasms they were uttering against her, it would not have affected her, now that she
saw

saw her party so much the superior ; but she was very much hurt, when Sir Edward Bergholt came up, and leaning over the back of her chair, said, in rather a low voice, “Miss, what do you wear that foolish head-dress for ? I wish you would give it me, and I would burn it.”—He spoke seriously ; and when he was serious, what he said carried weight. He said with energy, “ Promise me never to appear in it again ! ” —The fear that he was growing violent, and would be heard, prevented her questioning his authority ; and she hastily gave him her word. The Miss Affingtons joined her, and she presently forgot the circumstance. Between the acts, and while refreshments were handing round, Lady Cottisbrooke beckoned her to a vacant seat close to her, and at a distance from others. With an encouraging smile, and something like timid hesitation, she said, “ My dear Miss Lamorne, will you forgive me, if I take an undue liberty with you ? May I beg of you to forbear distinguishing yourself by

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the peculiarity of your dress? I am not fond of young people's trying their strength by a party : the victory is scarcely worth having—and a defeat is irreparable."

With astonishment and humility, Peregrina heard, and replied, that she was extremely sorry the singularity of her head-dress, which had at first been the effect of accident, should have incurred censure ;—that she confessed herself wrong, and should be happy to correct her opinion by Lady Cottisbrooke's.

"That is just the answer I expected from your good sense," replied the countess. "You must have seen already, my dear, the disagreeable predicament into which that singularity has drawn you, otherwise I would not have ventured to speak thus freely."

"I see it clearly," answered Peregrina, imagining only that her ladyship meant Sir Edward's rough speech behind her chair, which she did not know had been overheard — "I am very much obliged to your ladyship,

ship, and hope you will always speak as freely ; for I know little of the world."

"Since you give me permission," returned Lady Cottisbrooke, "I will use it whenever I think my experience can be of service to you. You will find, my dear, some who will flatter you out of good-will towards you, many more who will do it from a less laudable motive ; but of this be assured, that you will find none more sincere than myself, though multitudes will better recommend themselves to your favor ; and remember, I speak from my heart, when I say I should be happy to serve you, and that, whenever your residence in Devonshire-place becomes either unpleasant or imprudent, I shall be proud to receive you in New Norfolk-street."——Viotti's bow rapped *silence* on the desk, and the conversation ended.—Sir Edward, who seemed to rise from the ground behind Lady Cottisbrooke's chair, cried out, "Bravo ! I am *now* resolved ;" and capering out of the room, appeared no more.

“ *Unpleasant or imprudent ?* ” repeated Peregrina to herself.—“ Lady Cottisbrooke’s civilities are very flattering ; but how is it possible my being in Devonshire-place can ever be *unpleasant* or *imprudent* ?—*Unpleasant* I am sure it can never be ; but by *imprudent*, I suppose she means that it may be a situation too expensive for me. Well, when I next see her, I will tell her how generous Mr. Haccombe is to me.”

From this concert the party were engaged to a ball ; and here it was that Lord Surcheſter commenced his plan of *diſſembled diſſimulation*, and leaving Mrs. Haccombe to dance with a commoner, ſecured Peregrina for the two firſt dances ; and was ſo extremely diligent in making uſe of his tongue and eyes, and ſo very laſh of his adoration, that Peregrina ſuppoſed him tipſy, and felt quite comforted when ſhe exchanged his peerſhip for moſt Hamilton Courtland.

CHAP. III.

FROM this period, an odd and unintelligible change seemed to take place in the conduct of the major part of the family towards their guest; who perceived it, but, chusing rather to distrust her own judgment than the kindness of such friends, wished not to give the idea credit, by ruminating on it. Mrs. Haccombe, though not uncivil in general, now and then, especially in public and in their large parties, indulged herself in some of those bouncing airs towards Peregrina, with which she seldom failed, sooner or later, to treat those she had no interest in conciliating. Mrs. Barnby had got a pouting habit, which Peregrina called low spirits, and attributed to Sir Edward's unhappy situation; and, relaxing her assiduities, she frequently now

gave Miss Lamorne opportunities of exercising herself in her favorite accomplishments, by suffering her to remain alone.

But, whatever fear these changes might have produced in her mind, respecting the propriety of her remaining the guest of the Haccombe family, was done away by the reduplicated kindness of the master of the house, who, with an openness of attachment and a frankness of conduct that wanted only a better motive than craft to have been highly laudable, literally behaved to her as to a daughter. Perceiving and approving her resumed sedulity in her elegant occupations, and looking forward to them for pleasure and the gratification of his vanity, whenever fate or the laws should unmarry him, he insisted on Peregrina's having those assistances that might facilitate her labors and perfect her skill; and of which, on a comparison of her attainments with those of her friends, who had had greater opportunities

portunities of instruction, she conceived herself to stand very much in need.

Her hours now passed more pleasantly and more rationally than before: her morning engagements at home kept her from morning folly and dissipation: she enjoyed the evening amusement as a relaxation from severe attention: she seemed now to have something above the *butterfly-character*; and she received, with modest pleasure, the praises bestowed on her drawings and her musical execution. She observed less Mrs. Haccombe's relaxed guard over her temper, and Mrs. Barnby's growing indifference; and there were but two, and those apparently trifling particulars, which she could wish amended in her situation. The one was Lord Surcheſter's attention to her in public: the other was the wearisome impertinence of Sir Edward Bergholt, who, childishly interfering with whatever was going forward, would now interest himself in her pursuits. Sometimes

he would for half an hour, when she was drawing, sit down with her, and converse most seriously and most agreeably, discovering to her pity intellects incomparably formed by nature, and a heart whose strong feelings were destruction to its possessor. He would talk in a strain of melancholy till the tears trickled down her cheeks : he would then laugh aloud at her, and scamper away to some new trifle.

Mrs. Haccombe, never a favorite with the maniac, was now worse treated by him than ever ; and Lord Surcheſter was frequently reſtrained from reſentment at his ſarcaſtic wit, by nothing but the privilege of his condition. No one eſcaped the laſh of his ſatire, or the teasing of his nonſenſe, at which it was impoſſible always to forbear laughing ; a circumſtance which never failed to render him ſerious and violent.

Matters went on thus for about three weeks, and, the town being at the full'eſt,
Peregrina

Peregrina was introduced to every species of dissipation and amusement; but the gayer pleasures had lost their seductive dangers with their novelty; and, though delighted with all she saw, her heart continued steady to its early preferences; and an anxious thought, that would sometimes cross her gayest moments, how she was to live in future, or how, after such indulgences, to accommodate herself to the comparative hardship of earning a livelihood, made her pensive when others were intoxicated with joy.

It was one morning, after an evening spent at a masked ball, when Lord Surchester, heated with wine, and franked, as it were, by the character of the entertainment, had been so troublesome as to make her angry and cautious, that Mr. Hacombe requested one of his not unfrequent interviews in the library. She found him still graver than usual, and began to misconstrue the thoughtfulness of his aspect

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into

into displeasure. He drew a chair for her, and, with a degree of agitation that still more than his natural failure of ideas obstructed his speech, he began to bestow commendations, and to repeat those expressions of interest and parental regard with which he had commenced his influence over her, and from which, to do him justice, he had never, *in his words* or *his actions*, receded. With an apology for his presumption in coming forward to give advice, he next proceeded to remark on the conduct of Lord Surcheſter, of whom Peregrina was aſtoniſhed to hear him ſpeak in terms the moſt vilifying: he hinted at that bond of union between them which he could not but know would ſuggeſt itſelf, even unmentioned, to her mind, namely, the earl's active and unconcealed ſervices; but he ſeemed to wiſh it to be underſtood, that for theſe acts of friendſhip he had paid, as he really had, to their full value.

But

But the matter on which he wished to speak, was that feature in his lordship's character by which, without caution, *Peregrina* might, either in her peace or her reputation, suffer ; and on this point he labored with a degree of energy that made her regard him with increased gratitude. She saw not that selfishness, jealousy, and a passion scarcely more justifiable than that of which he warned her, were, in this instance, his dictators : she saw only that a man, who had no stimulative to kindness but voluntary charity, no obligation to her but that of his own generous heart, was standing up, the monitor, the protector of a creature, who, but for him, might have been friendless and wretched. With difficulty she forbore, while thus warm with gratitude, and enamored of his goodness, to reveal to him every circumstance of her situation ; and with still greater difficulty did the crafty champion of distressed damsels, when he saw her thus off her guard,

adhere to the prudent resolution he had formed. She however, in her reply to his cautions, expressed such terror of going wrong, and such an unaffected preference of a clear conscience to the trash of the whole world, that he was not sorry he had reserved his fire. They parted still better pleased than ever with each other, he assuring her that during his life, and after his death, he would prove his care for her.

It gave Mr. Haccombe no pleasure to be forced thus to remove his vigilance from his wife, whom he wished to detect, to Miss Lamorne, whom it was his nearest concern to preserve. Still more inconvenient was this real transfer of Lord Surchester's attention, as it robbed him of the hope of getting speedily rid of his wife. However Mrs. Haccombe might be imposed on, it was impossible any one else should be deceived, for the earl had made too great use of the liberality his duped mistress

mistress had allowed him ; and though, in their now much less frequent tête-à-têtes, he always endeavoured to soothe her, and to make her of his counsel, by telling her to what lengths his anxiety for her safety would prompt him to carry his dissimulation, she had fears not to be repressed, and her brain was at work to ease her heart.

CHAP. IV.

IN two days after Peregrina's conference with Mr. Haccombe, and before the impression it had made on her sensibility was at all effaced, she received by the general post a letter ! the first letter she had ever paid postage for ; for it need not be observed that neither Lady Jemima, nor the Miss Byrams, had ever honored her with their notice. — The post-mark was Oxford ; and opening it with trembling curiosity, she read :

“ BE prudent ! be secret ! If you do not destroy this, keep the knowledge of it wholly to your own heart, and you may be safe—no otherwise, believe me.

“ Who

“ Who I am, why I interest myself for you, I need not tell you ; and it is in vain for you to enquire. At this distance, I am acquainted not only with your situation, but with your actions, and not unfrequently with your thoughts ; and, as I mean to employ this knowledge solely for your benefit, I trust you will return the obligation in the only way I wish—by attention.

“ You think yourself one of the happiest creatures on earth ; but believe me, you are most wretched. I know less of your origin than of your merits ; but I understand you were *adopted* by, if not the *offspring* of, that worthless woman Lady Je-mima Byram. I find you now anew adopted by people as unworthy ; and, without the interposition of such a friend as myself, I see not how you can escape their nets.

“ Your chief friend, in the house you are in, is the master of it ; and in him you have the most implicit confidence. I blame
you

you not ; for, unless you had his evil endowments, you could not detect his motives. Never disposed to the command of his affections, he has indulged them to satiety ; and now, in his more advanced years, having acquired a habit of craft, the open field of pleasure has lost its charms, and he must circumvent before he can enjoy.

“ Chance has thrown you in his way ; but your disposition, and the steadiness of your principles, awe him. What you, in the ingenuousness of your heart, praise in him as fatherly tenderness, is a passion he dares not avow ; and, while you bless him as a virtuous parent, you encourage him as a vicious lover.

“ Could you compare his manners now with what they were before your arrival, you would be alarmed. Home *then* had no charm for him ; *now* he is seldom absent from it. His amusements were *then*
among

among men ; *now* he is of all your female parties, hovering over you, and grinning away your fair fame, while he flatters you. His propensity was gambling in all its modifications ; on 'Change amongst the monied men, at Brookes's with the unmonied. Now he seems to have no enjoyment in the vicissitudes of chance : he boasts himself cured of his folly—he is laughed at for its remedy.

“ Of such a man beware ! ’Till you hear farther from me, make no visible alteration in your conduct, but rely on my vigilance for your safety. Conceal, as you value your safety, all knowledge of this dangerous character. Be chearful, be gay, but be innocent ; and if my skill informs me you act as I wish, you shall shortly hear again from your

GOOD GENIUS.”

CHAP. V.

PEREGRINA was waiting for her music-master when this letter was brought to her; and, excepting the presence of Sir Edward Bergholt, who was attentively reading a book he always carried in his pocket, she was alone. Not suspecting that there was need of privacy in opening a letter that came by a conveyance so little secret, she had broken the seal; and, as she proceeded, grew too much absorbed by the contents to recollect the necessity of quitting the room. Sir Edward seemed unconscious of what passed, and she re-perused the letter without interruption; and then, too much disturbed to continue her playing, from which she had been called off, she took up her work.

Sir Edward, like a man who thinks it unpolite to leave an only companion to their own thoughts, made her start from her reverie by clapping the leaves of his book together, and putting it up. He then began a conversation :——

“ So, miss, I suppose you have had a letter from your mama ! ”

“ I have no mother ! ”

“ O, what a fib !—Well, then it is from your papa ! ”

“ I have no father ! ”

“ O for shame !—Why, don't we all know that Lady *Jemima* Byram is your mama ; and that old impudent jackanapes of a lord, that *my* mama is so fond of, is your papa ! ”

“ Good heaven ! Sir Edward,” said *Peregrina* raising her eyes from her work ; “ how can you talk so ?—I beg your pardon,” she added

added more mildly ; “ I forgot myself.”— Then recollecting her letter, and its uncomfortable contents, she burst into tears ; and he quitted the room.

Clementi came presently ; and with great difficulty she got through her lesson, from which she flew to her own apartment, to reconsider the caution she had received. She could not doubt the good intention of the writer : it seemed inconsistent with the character of an assassin. She was lost in conjecture, but inclined to give all possible credit to the monition.

Here was now a fatal alloy infused into every cup of pleasure the world could offer her ; and, however salutary it might prove in the end to herself, the beverage was rendered intolerably unpalatable. It was the hardest task imaginable to learn to distrust where she had had every reason for confidence. The distress of her mind would have operated too forcibly on her spirits, had

had not an engagement to a grand dinner, and the opera, obliged her to turn her thoughts towards her dress. She again revised her letter; and concluding, from its tenor and its injunctions, that she was to persist in her usual habits of life, she did not dare decline the party for the day.

At night, when she retired to rest, the singular event of the morning destroyed all inclination to sleep; and she could not forbear casting about in her mind who could be this unknown friend, who seemed so well acquainted with her situation, and boasted the scrutiny of her thoughts. Lady Cottisbrooke was the person most likely; but she was at Margate, for the benefit of Lady Essex Courtland's health; and it was hardly probable, either that she had removed to Oxford, or that she should so conceal the interest she had before avowed for her.

Whether

Whether or not the advice came from her, she had a great inclination to make her acquainted with it, and consult her on the steps she should pursue ; and, in hope of hearing she would soon be in town, she the next morning, meeting Sir Edward in her way to the drawing-room, asked him when he had seen Captain Courtland.

“ I saw him yesterday.”

“ Do you know when Lady Cottisbrooke comes to town again ? ”

“ No ; I do not.”

“ I wish you would learn.”

“ Why, what is it to you, Miss ? ”

“ Lady Cottisbrooke has always been very kind to me, and I always wish to see her.”

“ I do not think you will see her before the winter. I told her not to come.”

“ I wish then I knew how to direct to her,” said Peregrina, a little off her guard.

“ Why,

“ Why, what have you got to say ? ”

“ O, nothing very particular ! ” replied she, coloring at the want of caution she had betrayed :—“ only I think it would be respectful to write to her ; for she has always expressed a friendship for me—and in my situation (she continued with a deep sigh) I may often want a friend, and a home.”

Sir Edward skipped up the stone staircase four or five stairs at a time ; and Peregrina saw he paid no attention to what she said.

He had just quitted her, when a servant came with the usual message from Mr. Haccombe, which she obeyed less willingly than ever.

After the accustomed etiquette and professions, he asked her how Lord Surcheester had behaved to her the preceding evening.

“ He was very troublesome at dinner ; and I was fearful would have continued so at
the

the opera, had not the Lady Morays beckoned him into their box, as you saw."

" Well, my dear Miss Lamorne ! he has gone greater lengths than I thought any man would have dared to have gone, with a man of my—I mean, my character, as a man of—you understand me—a man of honor.—He had the assurance to make proposals to me for you, my dear Miss Lamorne ! "

" For me, sir ?—Sure it is impossible ! "

" Don't misunderstand me, my dear !—I do not mean proposals—honorable proposals : but he gave me to understand, in so many words, what was tantamount to—that if I chose it he would make you a very handsome settlement."

" Good God ! " exclaimed Peregrina—" am I reduced then so low ?—And pray, Sir, what did you say ? I hope you told him I should hear of it ; and that I would never meet him again."

" No,

“ No, no, my dear madam ! Fair and softly ; that’s always my way : it’s the way I have got forward all my life. I always think of the oak and the willow. My motto is, *Je plie et ne romps pas*—that’s my motto.”

“ But, Sir, what answer did you give him ? I hope he understands that it is an insult I never shall forgive.”

“ Why, between friends, my dear madam, tho’ I despise Lord Surcheſter as much as you can, and think him a very bad man—there is a little affair between us juſt now, that I want him to carry through for me ; for he has very good borough intereſt ; and it will be ſome thouſands in my way, if it ſucceeds. But, depend on me, I will take care of you. I ſhould not chuſe to make ſuch a man my enemy, becauſe there is no ſaying what ſuch a man will ſay when provoked. But I told him in ſo many words that you were under my protection, and
4
that

that I should on no consideration give up my interest in you. And on this you may depend."

The peer himself was announced at this moment; and Peregrina, with an increase of distress, retired in haste before she was seen.

The few hours that were passed of this day had produced more than their share of uneasiness to her. She had learnt from Sir Edward, that an idea was abroad of her being the daughter of Lady Jemima and Lord Surcheester; and now she heard that she was pursued by his lordship with the basest intention. The former suggestion she knew to be idle, and it might exist only in the wild conceit of the reporter; but what she had heard from Mr. Haccombe was important; and when she recollected that she had no firmer reliance, than on the honor of a man she had been taught to distrust, she became almost stupified with horror.

CHAP. VI.

It was some relief to Peregrina's agitated mind, to hear, in the course of the day, that her volunteer guardian—the man she was most afraid of, was about to quit London for a few days: such a respite entirely prevented any new distress from him; and she had leisure at least for rumination; but rumination could do little where there were so few first principles to work on. As an application to Lady Cottisbrooke might possibly betray her into a disclosure of what had awakened her suspicion, and forfeit the friendship of her ladyship, or whoever else might be the writer of the mysterious letter, she was, on consideration, fearful of risking the measure, and could only resolve to wait patiently, in hope of the arrival of a second monitory epistle; but how she was to merit

even that, she was ignorant—she was told it depended on herself—but how could she square her conduct by a rule not given her? which rule she was nevertheless bound to observe!

Mrs. Haccombe had continued her odd behaviour to Miss Lamorne, with all the variation of polite displeasure, till the evening of the day when Mr. Haccombe went into the country, and when at Ranelagh Lord Surcheſter's affiduities had been ſo troubleſome, and his tongue ſo unreſtrained, that, after having warned him not to oblige her to repreſent his behaviour to her friends, ſhe left that end of the party where he was, and getting cloſe to Mrs. Haccombe, ſhe told her ſhe believed Lord Surcheſter had drank too much, and ſhe wiſhed he might be kept at a diſtance from her. Mrs. Haccombe, who had with no favorable ſentiments ſeen him thus unneceſſarily cautious, if it was caution, willingly took Peregrina under her protection,

tell-

telling her it was only people who were very much used to the world that could keep the men in order after dinner. She then consigned her to the care of Mrs. Barnby, who had been between Mrs. Haccombe and the earl; and then dexterously slipping herself into that place, under pretence of keeping him away from Miss Lamorne, but in reality to keep him to herself, she linked her arm within his, and continued thus vigilant in her duty towards her *protégée* all the evening: but Mrs. Barnby could not so easily brook the removal.—She pouted all the night, and would scarcely speak to Peregrina. When seated in the carriage to return home, Miss Lamorne made her acknowledgments to Mrs. Haccombe for her obliging care, and expressed herself, without reserve, very much offended at Lord Surcheester's freedom of conversation, which was such as she never before had heard. She felt not at all intimidated by perceiving that he had the good opinion of her protectress, who seemed de-

firous that all should be attributed to excess of wine—His lordship had *the best heart in the world*—he was a most *elegant, agreeable* man; but Miss Lamorne, in *her* situation, was very right to avoid conversation with him. The great disparity of their ranks would certainly render any attention on his part a matter of public notice:—she certainly could not be too cautious;—for though Lord Surcheester was certainly *a most agreeable* man, and she herself and every other woman of rank and fashion understood such rattling behaviour and were accustomed to it, yet she did not take on herself to say that his lordship was a bit better than the rest of the world: and it might do an obscure young woman great mischief to be noticed by him.

“ I believe it can do nobody much good,” interrupted Mrs. Barnby in a mouthing tone.

“ Indeed ! ”

“ Indeed ! ” said Mrs. Haccombe, after a pause that indicated surprise.

“ No indeed,” replied the niece tauntingly—“ I do not think such a man’s notice is for any body’s reputation; and if he goes on as he does now, I think Mr. Haccombe should know it.”

“ Why, heyday ! ” cried the aunt—“ Lucy ! what is the matter with you now ? ”

“ Nothing new, I assure you—But I shall certainly tell my uncle what was the subject of Lord Surcheester’s conversation to Miss Lamorne—it was very little short of persuading her to elope with him.”

“ Indeed it is very true,” interposed Peregrina ; “ and upon my word, my dear Mrs. Barnby, I should think myself very much obliged to you if you would mention it to Mr. Haccombe, when he comes home ; for it grows worse and worse.”

“ I think so, my dear,” answered Mrs. Barnby ; “ I expected every moment to see you quit us with him.”

“ I hope you had not so bad an opinion of me,” Miss Lamorne rejoined. “ I hope nobody in the world could tempt me to depart from decorum in the slightest degree ; I am sure, if I know myself, I would rather die than do wrong : but, as for Lord Surcheester, it is no merit to be deaf to him ; for I think, though I know it is only my ignorance, that he is the most disagreeable man I ever saw.”

“ It were well, my dear,” returned Mrs. Barnby, “ if *all women* thought so ; but I fear there are some who are not so nice as you, and yet ought to be more so.”

Mrs. Haccombe, by suffering these last words to irritate her, took them to herself, and replied, “ You had better not be quite so free with your tongue, Lucy.”

Pere-

Peregrina now feared a violent quarrel between the ladies, of which, though she knew not the cause, she wished not to witness the progress: but the last sentence seemed to have awed sweet Mrs. Barnby, and, with a sort of clumsy address, she pretended to direct the meaning of what she said to some other lady with whom Lord Surcheester had flirted—she did not dare explain or apologise—that would have been to have avowed the importance of a misconception; but she tacked and veered till she brought all right again, and they arrived good friends in Devonshire-place.

CHAP. VII.

It was Peregrina's custom, when ready, always to be in her place at the hour of meals without waiting a message from a servant, a ceremony which she thought ill became her dependent state; and on the following day she had to wait, in company with Sir Edward Bergholt, upwards of half an hour, while the ladies finished the duties of their toilet. A servant came in with a message from a person waiting, who wished to have seen Mr. Haccombe had he been at home; but he being absent, he had requested an audience of Sir Edward, who in one of his moping fits was sunk in one corner of the room: he ordered the man to be introduced, and Peregrina was a little fearful lest it might be some one not acquainted with his infirmity. She would
have

have retired, that at least she might not have witnessed a distressing scene ; but the room had but one door, and the stranger stood so that she could not conveniently pass him ; so she sat down again.

The man produced from his pocket a letter, which he gave to Sir Edward, saying that he was ordered not to return without an answer.

“ Who sent you ? ”

“ I do not know the gentleman, Sir. I am a waiter at the Portland Coffee-house.”

“ And from whom are you to have an answer ?---The letter is directed to Mr. Haccombe.”

“ I was told, Sir, to bring it here, and to get an answer.”

“ But nobody, except the person it is directed to, I suppose, can give you one ? and he is out of town.”

“ I do not know as to that, Sir. I fancy you could ; for I was bid not to come back without one. I fancy it is something in a hurry.”

“ Stay ; I will send it up to Mrs. Hacombe,” said Sir Edward, ringing the bell.

He did so ; but the messenger he sent instantly returned, and said that his mistress’s door was locked.—She was very busy, and desired that any body would just look at the contents of the letter, and send an answer.

Sir Edward then broke the seal : his brow became contracted into its severest frown : his pale color changed to a still more livid hue ; and his hand shook perceptibly. He enquired, in an agitated tone and manner, where the gentleman who sent the letter was to be found, and then went out with the messenger, as if to seek him.

Not

Not long after, the ladies came to the dining parlor, and sat down to dinner, at which Sir Edward soon rejoined them, apologising for his absence by his having gone in quest of a person whom he had missed. No farther enquiry was made, and the matter passed without comment.

The business on which Mr. Haccombe had, most reluctantly, quitted London, was of the electioneering species, and detained him longer than was expected, or had been hoped. In the mean time, life proceeded as usual in Devonshire-place. Lord Surchester was an almost incessant visitor, and tho' he gave Peregrina little cause to complain of his behaviour, his passion for her was not totally concealed. Sir Edward Bergholt was as incessant a torment to Mrs. Haccombe, who seemed to find some pleasure in venting the ill humor he excited, on Peregrina, till she began to think seriously of it. Still, however, she was of all her parties, and had nothing to

endure but a waywardness of temper, perhaps not to be conquered.

There came a letter by the post directed for Miss Lamorne. She made no doubt that it was from her *good genius*, but the writer scarcely deserved the dignified appellation; for it was from Mr. Haccombe himself, who thought proper on paper to renew those protestations of attachment his tongue was so prone to; and he had indulged himself through three pages in expressions of paternal regard, which the infusion of suspicion had depreciated much in the estimation of the reader.

The following day was more propitious, and, when alone, she received this second letter from Oxford.

“ You have secured for ever my friendship and esteem; and it shall be my sole care to protect you. Continue to act as you have done. Shew no suspicion. Let
your

your reason be vigilant, but let your heart be at ease.

“ My art tells me you are puzzled and alarmed at Mrs. Haccombe’s caprice of humor. Unless I am mistaken, it has a deep foundation. Her character is deposited in the hands of the earl her friend : he is tired of the charge. She has been apprehensive that the world and her husband would hear too much : to blind both, she permits his lordship’s attention to you. He has embraced the opportunity ; but, believe my infallible art, his love returns no more to her. He is poor. I know she supplies him with money ; but you are his present idol. Avoid him, as you would a serpent. He is a pestilence stalking in society.

‘ Do not, to relieve yourself from Mrs. Haccombe’s pettishness, confide in Mrs. Barnby. She is as bad as any one of the trio. I cannot fathom all her arts : my
skill

skill fails me there. But I know the angles for all male hearts—she has none of her own.

“ That strange medley of sense and nonsense, the nursing baronet, merits your compassion, and can never excite your fear or rouse your caution. He has been hardly treated. His blunt sincerity may be useful to you :—converse with him when you can, and bear with his follies as charity demands : they can hurt no one.

“ What you thought of, with regard to trusting Lady Cottisbrooke, was judicious ; the rejection of your scheme still more so. She is not at all connected with me, but she is one to whose affection I could safely consign you. She is an exemplary woman, but not always able to distinguish her duties. She is wrong in urging the match between her son Hamilton and Harriet Affington ; for money is not happiness :—yet she thinks justly, that wedded poverty

is misery, and I cannot blame her. You may trust the Affingtons, as much as you will find occasion to trust them; but they will prove fair-weather friends, if you go too far.

“ I shall never flatter you, but I will always commend you when you deserve it : —with the same freedom I shall always animadvert. I found, with sorrow, that your senses were a little intoxicated with the follies and flatteries of the town—I see, with pleasure, your improvement in steadiness. While you retain your candor, you can never greatly err; but remember, Peregrina Lamorne, that the situation you are in is not your own. I do not pretend to an investigation of your origin, but I have reason to believe there is some mystery in it: be it as it may, you can do yourself no harm by adapting your mind to hardship. I cannot conceive that the friendship of the family you are now in can last. The men love you—the women are jealous of you.

you. When the former feel disappointed, they will cool in their attachment, and leave you to your fate. But this will scarcely appease the female demons : your removal may follow. Keep yourself, therefore, armed for such a shock ; and, while you make your advantage of your present situation, be prepared in an instant to resign it. Still depend on the care of your

GOOD GENIUS."

The useful caution contained in this letter scarcely atoned to Peregrina for the misery she felt in being thus deprived, one by one, of the supports she had relied on in the kindness of her supposed friends ; and when, to divert the melancholy it had produced, she betook herself to her easel, and tried to give effect to Hebe's graceful hand, her thoughts reverted with a strong spring to her sad condition, and tears obscuring her sight, she sat down to weep, forgetful that she might be interrupted : and interrupted she was almost immediately by

by Sir Edward, whose impertinent inquisitiveness her recent admonition could hardly induce her to endure. He told her, in plain terms, that she was a fool for crying, let the cause be what it would, and pointed out some of the happiest and most thoughtless of those who frequented the house as more melancholy objects than herself. Then he broke out into a mournful apostrophe to his own fate; and when he grew rational, and the unison of his sorrow affected her, he began capering about the room, and went off.

When the first impressions this letter had made on her mind were a little blunted, her imagination could not confine itself to the small circle of intelligence her correspondent allowed her. She again busied herself in guessing at the author; but she was as far off as ever, and the hint relative to her having thought of Lady Cottisbrooke startled her. She bewildered herself anew, and gave the matter up in despair.

Mr.

Mr. Haccombe returned, and absence having raised his fondness into ardor, he sought a private audience of Peregrina at the first opportunity. After a thousand enquiries and effusions of joy, he revealed to her a *little project* he had formed for her advantage: this was no other than the making a settlement on her out of his own private fortune. The annual sum he urged her to accept was no less than five hundred pounds; and the only condition he annexed to it was, that she should not marry without his consent:—a restriction which entirely rendered her his slave, while it seemed to place her only in the light of a daughter.

But Peregrina was made cautious by the revelations of her secret monitor; and though Mr. Haccombe's generosity astonished, it could not influence her. With due expressions of gratitude, she declined the obligation; but it was in a way that left him at a loss to guess at her motive, and rather fearful she had too much sagacity.

His

His kindness, however, was not diminished, and, even when with his family, he seemed to have less command over his fondness than ever.

Whether it was this incaution which Lord Surcheſter had obſerved, or the increaſing violence of his love that prompted it, did not appear ; but the next morning ſhe had a letter from the earl, in which he explicitly offered her his hand. She could not hesitate a moment what answer ſhe ſhould return, for ſhe had no idea of marriage without love, or of love without eſteem ; but, having before talked on the ſubject of his lordſhip's attachment with Mr. Haccombe, ſhe thought it proper that he ſhould be made acquainted with this new offer. Her judgment told her ſhe riſqued nothing by this confidence : ſhe therefore ſent the note to him, and with it the answer ſhe deſigned to return. It was an unmollified refusal ; and Mr. Haccombe haſtened to her

her in person, to express his approbation and admiration.

In a less time than she had before waited, she received from Oxford a third letter, to this import :

“ I AM certain you may be trusted to your own prudence ; and from a cloud that hangs over your horoscope, I greatly fear you will need to exert the whole of it. Through this cloud, no aid of optics allows me to penetrate. I must therefore request you, if you can do it secretly, to write to me a full account of your situation, since Mr. Haccombe’s return ; and I shall be the better able to guide you.—I see a mysterious aspect, which you can doubtless explain.

“ Direct your letter to Ami Bonange, Post-office, Oxford.

“ Add

“ Add to the account I ask you, as much as you chuse to reveal of your own situation — particularly tell me whether any man is as yet honored with your love. It will be more for your benefit to be unreserved towards me, than to suffer me to discover, by my art, what I ask. I desire not to intrench on your prudence or your promises ; but what you are at liberty to reveal, reveal undoubting, to your

GOOD GENIUS.”

Peregrina was delighted with the opportunity offered her, of writing in return to these friendly letters. She considered her secret friend as indeed her tutelar deity, and referring all her actions to his or her approbation, she wished nothing concealed. But this partial knowledge again confounded her ; and, but for the date, she would have been persuaded it was some one very near her, to whom she was thus indebted.

She

She seized the first opportunity for writing; and, after expressing her strong sensations of gratitude for the protection she had experienced, she gave a succinct account of Mr. Haccombe's generous offer, and Lord Surcheſter's more dazzling propoſal, and of the reception ſhe had given to both. She then proceeded :

“ To reveal as much as I could, would be to forfeit your regard, by infringing on my promiſe. I can tell but little of my origin; but that little would offend, if revealed. I am therefore ſilent; and, conſcious of the diſadvantages I labor under, I ſubmit in ſilence to a degraded ſtate.

“ My heart is free—no one of worth has as yet laid claim to it: and now it behoves me to take good care of it. I am too poor to love.

“ What

“ What is designed me, I know not ; but Mrs. H. and Mrs. B. are much closeted together, and look with no benignity on me. I hear that Mr. H. is going into the north with Lord S. and that Mrs. H. then goes down to their country - house near Meopham in Kent. She expressed, with more than usual kindness, her wish for my accompanying her thither ; and I, supposing you would chuse it, acquiesced.—I trust you have no view but that you avow—*my security* ; for, believe me, should I find that you are endeavouring to make me distrust others, that I may be at last duped by you, I shall make use of all the sagacity you have taught me, against yourself.

“ Our time, while we remain in London, is portioned out into a variety of engagements. I hear of nothing farther.

“ I have thus, whosoever you are, obeyed you, in the sincerity of my heart, and
with

with an earnest desire to do right. Whether I am justified in replying to you, or even in listening to you, I know not ; but, for Heaven's sake, think how cruel it would be to deceive

The unsuspecting and inexperienced

P. L."

CHAP. VIII.

IN a few days, and before she had again heard from Oxford, Mr. Haccombe and the earl departed; and immediate preparations were made for removing to Bellevue-park. It seemed intended that the family should remain there some months: for the waggon was laden with the baggage, and Peregrina was directed to take with her all her clothes, &c. With some regret she quitted London and her masters for a new situation, where she felt as if she should be more entirely in the power of those she was with: but Mrs. Haccombe talked largely of pleasures to be enjoyed, and of visits to the sea coast; and in these she promised herself some gratification.

The three ladies travelled in the coach with four horses, postillions, outriders, &c. all *in style*: the coachman drove the house-keeper and the lady's maid in the phaëton: post-chaifes, filled with the other servants, made up a grand retinue. Sir Edward went on horseback, attended by his own man. The party dined at Dartford, and reached Bellevue in the evening.

Whatever restrictions the contracted space allotted to dwellings in London had laid on oriental taste and profusion, were here abundantly atoned for; and Peregrina was again astonished and delighted at the grandeur of the apartments, which formed a climax of expence. Whatever in other less opulent mansions was *silvered*, was here *silver*: the furniture was composed of materials almost too delicate for personal wear: the most expensive china was in common use; the floors, the carpets, the hangings, the fashies, the cielings, the draw-
ing

ing rooms, the chambers, the kitchens, could not be conveniently more expensive than they were made. Mirrors imported from France, chimney-pieces from Italy, and every treasure of the Indies, were here in lavish frequency; but Peregrina was astonished to see, in the large collection of pictures, not one that could be called good—and in the library, not a book that would move!

It was the occupation of her first morning to ramble about this immense building, which indeed, externally, could boast little more than its length of brick-work and the number of its windows. The housekeeper, swelling with the reflection of her master's wealth, shewed her the worked muslin hangings of the best bed, trimmed with lace, and the gilt dressing plate; and Peregrina thought herself deep in the Arabian Night's Entertainments.

This house had been raised from the ground by its present possessor, at an expence not far short of fourscore thousand pounds; and, without an heir to enjoy it after him, he had set his heart on its perfection, which it had not yet attained, nor was it at present prudent to continue his magnificent plans; for, deep as was his purse, he had found the means of shrinking it; and, notwithstanding his having discontinued play, he had perceived that, since he had returned to London from Bath, he had spent at a fearful rate. Mrs. Haccombe had *had occasion* for large sums:—he was not in the habit of refusing; and his friend the earl had, to be sure, had as much as he could conveniently spare;—but the contract would make all good.

Mrs. Haccombe, extremely fatigued with the journey, and *sweet* Mrs. Barnby, *always anxious for her aunt's ease* remained the greatest part of this day together, and without

out other company. Sir Edward came little in Peregrina's way ; and she, delighted with the beautiful garden and the circumjacent prospect, wished they might remain for ever in peace and quietness at Bellevue.

At supper, Mrs. Haccombe communicated the plan of pleasure for the next day. It was devoted to a dinner on board a ship then at Gravesend, and of which Captain Millis, a frequent visitor in Devonshire-place, and no small favorite with the lady of the house, was the commander. Mrs. Barnby represented the scheme as highly delightful ; and Peregrina was not disposed to depreciate it in idea. She heard there was to be a large party ; and she liked the novelty of such an entertainment.

“ Am I asked, mama ? ” said Sir Edward.

“ I wish you would leave off that foolish custom of calling me *mama* !—No, you are not asked.”

“ But I shall go,” he muttered ; “ or I am sure you will all behave very ill.”

“ I had rather you would stay away, Sir.”

“ I believe so ; but I shall not humor you.”

At this period of the incipient squabble, a servant threw open the door, and announced Captain Courtland, who, covered with dust and very much fatigued, excused himself for his abrupt entrance, by saying he was on his road from Margate, where his mother was ; and, finding it too late to get on to town that night, he had come to beg a lodging.

Mrs. Haccombe, delighted even with the distant tinkle of nobility, gave him a most gracious reception, and insisted on his remaining with them the next day, and partaking their amusement : to which he made no objection. Sir Edward, with
whom

whom he was, in town, on a footing of the closest intimacy, now chose not to bestow any notice on him, but, as if displeased with his entrance, withdrew early to rest; and Peregrina, who thought the captain took more notice of her than the aunt and niece would approve, soon followed.

Mrs. Barnby, it is probable, did not think it prudent to give the young people much opportunity of conversation the next morning; for she was uncommonly liberal of her company to Miss Lamorne, and scarcely lost sight of her for a moment till they went to dress. As they had a distance of eight miles to go, and were to dine at four o'clock, they set out earlier than their usual hour. The ladies were in the carriage, the gentlemen on horseback; and with all the forms and accommodations used on such occasions, they were received by Captain Millis in the great cabin.

The party consisted of fourteen persons, three of whom were very genteel young women. After a very good dinner, some hints were dropped in conversation, which led Peregrina to believe that these young persons were going the ship's voyage. On enquiring of one of them, she learnt that they had embarked for Bombay, whither the vessel was bound, and that they went without an intention or wish of returning to their native country : their heads were full of men and money ; and they had thought on the subject till they had lost all delicacy in talking of it.

Peregrina could not but recollect how nearly she had been in their situation ; and this circumstance made her curious to learn how far her ideas of the business corresponded with the reality. These ladies were all nieces to the captain of the ship ; and having from their infancy been accustomed to think of Bombay, and to long for eastern husbands, they were delighted with
being

being thus far on their road to their wishes : they therefore described every circumstance as charming ; but they could in no way qualify that one insuperable obstacle, that they must marry men they scarcely knew ; and still Peregrina remained disgusted.

It was a serene evening, and the scene was uncommonly beautiful. Mrs. Haccombe talked of staying late, for the pleasure of being on the water by moonlight ; and Miss Lamorne, very well pleased with her new acquaintances, gossiped with them apart. Sir Edward was upon deck, leaning over the side of the vessel in deep abstraction ; and Captain Courtland, almost as vacant, sat at a distance, while Mrs. Haccombe and Mrs. Barnby flirted with the remaining gentlemen of the party, and were not two minutes in a place. Presently Sir Edward declared his intention of going home ; Mrs. Haccombe seemed pleased, and tried to persuade Courtland to go with him ; but he said he had thoughts of going

to town by water, leaving his horse at Bellevue till his return. This was not opposed. Mrs. Haccombe and Mrs. Barnby fauntered about and remained out of sight, till Peregrina began to think they had been long absent. She had just said to one of the young ladies that she would seek them, when Courtland entered the cabin with Captain Millis; and, as if continuing a conversation which had agitated him, said,

“ You are at liberty now, Sir, to put what questions you please to this lady.”

Peregrina, alarmed at this solemnity, asked hastily, “ Where is Mrs. Haccombe?”

“ She is gone,” replied Courtland with emotion.

“ Good heaven! gone? Where is Mrs. Barnby?”

“ Gone with her,” said Courtland.—
 “ But do not be alarmed, Madam; you
 are

are perfectly safe.—May I be permitted,” continued he, to the young ladies and Captain Millis, “to speak in private with Miss Lamorne?”

“On no account!” said Peregrina hastily but firmly. “I will not hear you, Captain Courtland.”

“Stay, madam,” interposed Millis: “let *me* ask you a few questions.—Is it not true, that you wish to get out of England, and go to Bombay?”

“By no means,” she answered.

“But is it not your *wisest* plan to do so?”

“I do not understand you.”

“Pray leave us for a few minutes,” said Captain Millis to the four present.

Peregrina was too much astonished to oppose it. He shut the cabin-door, and taking her hand, said bluntly, but not intimidatingly,

timidatingly, “ I am told by Mrs. Haccombe, young lady, that you are too great a favorite with her husband, and that you have not been quite so prudent as you should have been. She seems interested for you, and wishes your indiscretions should be forgotten, and this awkward attachment broken by a trip to the Indies, where I dare say your pretty person will soon make your fortune. It was therefore, as I have a great friendship for Mrs. Haccombe, settled between us that you should be left here in this way ; and I am sure nothing can have been better planned or executed. I would not have done so much for any one else ; but I had a very good character of you, in all but this point.—I assure you, I run some risque for your sake.”

“ You are either, Sir,” said Peregrina, undaunted and provoked, “ very wicked or very weak.—I desire Captain Courtland may come in.”

Courtland,

Courtland, who had not quitted the door, instantly entered.

She desired Captain Millis to repeat the calumny he had uttered.

She then asked Courtland, whether he could believe that Mrs. Haccombe had propagated such a report.

He replied in the affirmative; and Millis broke out into a laugh of sarcasm and triumph.

She believed the whole a conspiracy against her, and supposed Courtland deep in it.

He begged her to be calm, and to allow him a few words in private, without which it was impossible he could in any way serve her.

Millis, finding she was silent, withdrew; and Courtland, having seated her in a chair, began

began to speak in a manner that indicated very strong emotion ; while she, almost breathless, impatiently listened.

“ I have been employed,” said he, “ Madam, in a most extraordinary manner to serve you.—Read that letter,” continued he, taking a letter from his pocket-book.

“ Read it to me—I cannot see.”

He began :—“ Lose no time, Hamilton Courtland, in conjecturing who I may be, or what is my authority ; but instantly prepare, as a man of honor, a gentleman, and a soldier, to rescue one of the most amiable creatures in the world from one of hell’s blackest demons.—A word escaping you, renders the scheme abortive.

“ Haccombe’s wife is jealous of Peregina Lamorne ; but it is on Surcheſter’s account. He is away ; and I have reason to believe it is a concerted plan, that this
friendless

friendless angel shall be enticed, as to a party of pleasure, on Wednesday, on board Millis's ship at Gravesend. My skill deceives me, if she is not there to be left, to go the voyage to Bombay. Whether Millis is deceived, or aiding, I know not ; but I charge you, unless you would be scouted on earth and in heaven, be at Haccombe's, at Bellevue, on Tuesday night : try to get to the speech of the dear girl ; if you cannot, mingle in the banquet of the next day ; and when she finds herself betrayed, step forward to her rescue. A few high words will frighten Millis : seize Peregrina ; conduct her to your mother ; but I charge you, Hamilton, as you value your soul, consign her to her care the spotless faint you find her. Regard her only as a distressed fellow creature. Be humane —be a man of honor ; and applauding angels shall record thy virtue.

“ Failing of your purpose, hasten instantly to the India-house.—Spread an alarm
—send

—send even an express to old Hacombe himself—raise heaven and earth ; but save Peregrina.

“ Prepare your mother to receive her — she will not betray us.”

Peregrina felt encouraged. She asked Courtland how he came by that letter. He said, he received it at Margate by the post.

She guessed it came from Oxford ; but keeping her thoughts secret, she begged to know how Captain Courtland meant to act.

“ Can you ask ?” he replied.—“ Millis I suppose is duped, and he will be very willing to give you up. I have a letter from my mother to you. She waits at Northfleet for you, and will immediately, and most gladly, take you home.”

Lady

Lady Cottisbrooke's letter contained every consolation Peregrina could receive. She felt deeply the generosity of Hamilton, and was now only anxious to hear how Millis was disposed. It required some time, and some argument, to beat out of his salt-water head the idea Mrs. Haccombe had at first set afloat in it, and he would for near half an hour accede no farther than to a reference to his employer herself. But Hamilton would hear of nothing that should detain Peregrina. He talked fiercely and familiarly of his friends *in the Direction*; and Millis at length saw, for he knew Courtland's rank and connexions, that a peaceable acquiescence was his wisest part, though from his reluctance it was fairly to be inferred, that he expected to have been well paid for his trouble in conducting the young lady to Bombay.

The contest ended, Peregrina, worn to extremity with the agitation and terror she
had

had undergone, hastened Hamilton to depart. “ Stay,” said Millis : “ if you are to go, you may as well take all your rubbish with you.” He then called some of his men, and gave orders for the boat and for Miss Lamorne’s trunks, which, to her great surprise, the provident care of Mrs. Hacombe had contrived should be brought on board after her.

CHAP. IX.

THEY were soon on shore, and Courtland procuring a post-chaise, while Peregrina took out of her trunks the little she wanted, that the rest might come by sea to her at Margate, they set off together for the Queen's Head at Northfleet, which in less than half an hour they reached; and there found Lady Cottisbrooke alone, waiting in the greatest anxiety. She received Peregrina as she would have done a daughter. They spent the night where they were; and, setting off the next morning in her ladyship's carriage for Margate, they reached her house early in the evening. Lady Almerina Delaford either would not, or could not, disguise her vexation at Lady Cottisbrooke's returning too late to dress for the ball at the rooms. Lady Essex
asked

asked a thousand foolish questions; and Peregrina was glad to escape, under pretence of fatigue.

Lady Cottisbrooke seized the first opportunity of speaking alone to Peregrina: She expressed, in the kindest terms, the interest she felt for her, and congratulated herself that an accident, by which Miss Lamorne had not essentially suffered, and which must serve to convince her how improper a protectress Mrs. Haccombe was, had put it in her power to offer her an abode in her house, as long as she could make it agreeable to her. Lady Cottisbrooke told her she had had an eye to some inevitable necessity of a breach, ever since the appearance of the calumnious paragraphs in the public papers, and explained so fully their veiled meaning, that Peregrina could not but be anxious lest she too should have suffered in her reputation. Her ladyship quieted her fears on this head, and assured her that her quitting thus abruptly the family she had
been

been with, would be the severest censure that could be passed on them; and that should Mr. Haccombe, whose *penchant* for her was more than suspected by the world, resent his wife's conduct, and again offer her his protection and friendship, she would oppose his wish with all the authority Miss Lamorne would entrust her with.

In the regard of such a woman as Lady Cottisbrooke, Peregrina saw advantages, though less glittering, far more valuable than any Devonshire-place had afforded her, or Bellevue promised her; and she gladly accepted the condescending affection offered her.

It was her intention, at her first leisure, to write again to Oxford; but she was anticipated, the morning after her arrival, by a letter dated from thence, and containing these words :

“ YOUR

“ YOUR candid answer, my Peregrina, was every thing I could wish, and has convinced me my care for you is well bestowed and accepted. Do not for a moment entertain an unjust suspicion. I would sacrifice myself, ere I would injure you. It has been my good fortune once to rescue you—it shall be my future study to preserve you.

“ You have escaped from a set of people, the depravity of whose hearts you cannot yet know ; but a short time may develope it.

“ To my certain knowledge, that eastern sensualist Haccombe had no view in his kindness to you, but the adding you to his seraglio ; and finding your principles such as would not admit of an immediate connexion, I am persuaded he encouraged that bankrupt lord’s affiduities to his wife, in hopes of obtaining a divorce, and setting you in her place.

“ Mrs.

“ Mrs. Haccombe and her niece were overheard plotting the scheme of leaving you with Captain Millis.

“ But the most extraordinary matter, and that from which you had the most to apprehend, is this :—An application was made a short time ago to Mr. Haccombe, by a person of rather a good appearance, but of intellects and education so entirely Irish, that his meaning was scarcely intelligible. He enquired if there was not in the family a young miss, about seventeen or eighteen years of age, with brown hair, a very pretty mouth and hands, and who was *very much grown since he last saw her*. Subjoined to this odd enquiry, was an intimation that if the conduct of the *young miss* in question had been respectable, she would soon be claimed by some friends *who knew nothing of her*.

“ As your guardian, I took every possible method to obtain an interview with this

Hibernian, but it was out of my power ; I could only procure a sight of Haccombe's reply, of which I send you a copy.

‘ SIR,

‘ IN answer to your's, which met
 ‘ me on my return to town, I have only to
 ‘ say, that, if by the person you enquire
 ‘ after, you mean Miss Lamorne, she is un-
 ‘ der my protection, and needs not the at-
 ‘ tention of any other friend. I have reason
 ‘ to believe her perfectly contented with
 ‘ her situation in my house, and with my
 ‘ attachment to her. I mean to make a
 ‘ permanent settlement on her, to secure
 ‘ her against any accident to me, and am,
 ‘ Sir,

‘ Your most faithful and most
 ‘ obedient humble servant,

‘ ISAAC HACCOMBE.’

“ This letter was directed to *Mr. Geoghegan* : perhaps he may be of your acquaintance.

ance. Use your discretion, as to the steps you shall take in consequence of it.

“ You are now, I trust, in safety ; but still, admit no one to your confidence.— Write to me freely ; for you will never repent disclosing such a heart as your’s to your

GOOD GENIUS.

“ P. S. To be nearer you, I have removed to Canterbury. Direct, as before, to the Post-office there.”

The contents of this letter were more astonishing than those of the preceding ; and Peregrina, while she was thankful for the invisible protection she enjoyed, was yet very much hurt to find that it had not been in the power of her *good genius* to hinder so gross a calumny, as Mr. Hacombe’s billet contained, from reaching its destination. She was not long at a loss to recollect who it was that had made the

VOL. III. E application.

application. She remembered her old friend Dennis, Mr. Byram's servant : she knew, that though he had been discharged with the other supernumerary domestics, Lady Jemima had entertained thoughts of hiring him to accompany her to England, if she resolved on that measure ; and she flattered herself that her ladyship had taken up good resolutions in her favour, that what she had heard against her was as false as the aspersions of herself, and that her regard wanted only a proof of her desert.

On this supposition therefore, she wrote immediately to Canterbury, requesting her *good genius* if possible, to procure her such intelligence of Lady Jemima Byram as might enable her to undeceive her.

To this she had an immediate reply, deterring her from making any application to Lady Jemima, who was represented as beneath her regard, and utterly unlikely to have made the enquiry. But her *incognito* friend

friend comforted her by saying he had *caused one of his or her ministers* to write at the bottom of Mr. Haccombe's reply, a positive contradiction of the insinuation it contained, and a request for an interview, to which he had received no answer.

Peregrina was forced to give up whatever hopes she had conceived from this circumstance, and to rest contented under the voluntary protection offered her. She had become so accustomed to the correspondence of *Ami Bonange*, that she was no longer curious to know whom the designation meant; and where she now was placed, she had a bundance of comforts to be grateful for.

Lady Cottisbrooke had, as soon as Peregrina recovered from the alarm of her removal, given her to understand that she received her on the terms of a visitor, and that, as her eldest son and Lady Almerina Delaford would probably in the ensuing winter marry, and quit her, she looked for-

ward with pleasure to the addition Miss Lamorne's company would be in their family society. She hinted at Lady Effex's *weak state of health*, by which she meant the *weakness of her faculties*, though her maternal delicacy made her find a periphrasis for the calamity ; and suggesting, with a sigh, that when Hamilton Courtland and Harriet Affington were united, she should want some one to supply the place of her children, she complimented her young friend so far as to say she should feel great comfort in meriting her affection.

“ I have no right, dearest Madam,” replied Peregrina, with the tears glistening on her eye-lashes, “ to such tenderness : I am thrown on the world ; and I ought rather to seek a livelihood than to avail myself of your goodness. If your Ladyship could find me a situation in your family where I had some duty to discharge, I should feel still happier. It very ill becomes me to live in idleness.”

She

She burst into tears as she pronounced these words, recollecting what had been her hard fate. Lady Cottisbrooke, with great compassion tried to cheer her; and that her feelings might not be hurt by a weight of obligation, she proposed to her that she should endeavour to make Lady Effex apply to some accomplishments she was deficient in. Her Ladyship concluded what she proposed, by saying that she would always have Miss Lamorne considered as her sister, and that if she availed herself of her talents, it was only in consideration to her amiable delicacy.—No stipend was therefore to be thought on; but Lady Cottisbrooke's kind expressions left no room to doubt her generosity.

Lady Almerina Delaford's pride was now the only perceptible impediment to Peregrina's ease; but as this shewed itself chiefly in contempt, and was sure to meet Lady Cottisbrooke's reprehension, it gave her little uneasiness. Hamilton Courtland went

to join his regiment in a few days after Peregrina became his mother's guest. The Miss Affingtons were expected down early in July, to pay a visit of a few weeks to Lady Cottisbrooke; and nothing occurred to disturb Peregrina, except a rumour that Sir Edward Bergholt had idled himself down to Margate. She was not without suspicion that he was made a spy for the Haccombes, who, she doubted not, were informed before this time of her escape, by many of their acquaintances she had met at Margate; and her fears were confirmed, when a very few mornings after, he appeared at the door, and enquired for her. She begged Lady Cottisbrooke to be with her during this visit; and thus supported, she met him with tolerable courage. He was more *distracted* than ever she had seen him, but without any mixture of nonsense: he was gloomy and uncollected, and seemed choaking with some mental agitation. He wanted much to get Peregrina from Lady Cottisbrooke, and every assurance Ami

Bonange

Bonange had given her of his innoxiousness, gave way to strong suspicion, when, finding her resolute in refusing him a private audience, he gave her a letter from Mr. Haccombe, to which he requested an answer : it was a most tender, pathetic, elegiac complaint of her absence, and a most earnest, supplicating, amorous importunity of her to return :—there was no allusion to the true cause of her removal ; he seemed to think it choice, and still more erroneously, that it was in his power to recall her.—She would write no answer.—She put the letter into Lady Cottisbrooke's hand, and told Sir Edward, she supposed him acquainted with the nature of his embassy : she hoped he was ignorant of what had occasioned it ; but that whether he understood it or not, it was sufficient if she desired him to say for her to Mr. Haccombe that it did not suit her ever to return to his house.—Sir Edward got up, and turning towards the window, and leaping across the room, without wait-

ing a reply, he mounted his horse, and set off again, pensive.

Lady Cottisbrooke seemed to consider this as only an ebullition of his frenzy, and was affected by it. “ I knew Edward,” said she, “ a very different being, and the most promising young man in the world.”

“ I have often pitied him,” said Peregrina; “ but I think Mr. Haccombe makes a shameful use of his weakness.”

“ It seems so. I am sorry to see him look so very ill—it makes me fear his health will not aid his recovery.”

“ He looks indeed sadly—much worse than when I first knew him.”

“ Ah, Miss Lamorne ! had you known him before that terrible fever that deranged him, you would feel deeply for him now : he had, I think, the most gentlemanly person,

person, and manners, of any man I ever saw : not excepting even my dear boy Ham ; and I am very partial to *him*."

" Sir Edward's countenance is still very fine ; and when he is tolerably well, the expression of it is very interesting."

" Oh, nothing to what I remember it— and he grows thinner every day. I really believe he is very ill-treated by the Haccombes : they wish to have it expected that he will recover ; but I see no chance of it ; and I am persuaded, it is only because Mr. Haccombe finds the management of his estate profitable, and fears the interposition of the court of chancery, if Edward is once declared lunatic."

" He is very rational sometimes."

" So are most people in that melancholy way. I used to suspect that they would make a match for him with that artful woman,

man, Mrs. Barnby ; but I suppose that is given up." Peregrina, true to her word to Mrs. Barnby, was silent. "There was a time," added Lady Cottisbrooke, with a sigh, "when I used to think Edward Berg-holt and my Effex might have come together, but—"

She sighed deeply, and Peregrina turned the conversation to Mr. Haccombe's letter.

CHAP. X.

UNDER the protecting shade of a friendship that sedulously kept off from her every annoyance, Peregrina seemed at length fixed in peace and comfort. Lady Cottisbrooke, it must be confessed, was not without a hope of reward in what she did for her ; but it was a hope so sanctified by its aims, that it became highly laudable. It terminated solely in Lady Essex Courtland's advantage ; and with rapture she fancied she saw her daily improve under Miss Lamorne's tuition : she retained more on her memory ; she had left off several of her childish habits ; she had more curiosity ; in short, she promised much better than heretofore.

Thus assisting and assisted, thus pleasing and pleased, we may safely trust Peregrina to Lady Cottisbrooke's care, and see what is become of the too-long neglected Lady Jemima Byram, who, after the departure of the Haccombcs, and the more melancholy desertion of Lord Surcheſter, remained at Bath in an inextricable labyrinth of difficulties, which her defeated plans of liberation tended only to increaſe.

As ſoon as ſhe could recover herſelf after this cruel blow, and could look forward to her ſituation, if the earl ſhould have abſolutely relinquished her, ſhe wrote to him in thoſe terms that muſt inevitably, if he had any averſion to a ſcold, ſend him ſtill farther out of her reach. When it was her intereſt to *perſuade*, ſhe *threatened*; and, though all depended on a return of his paſſion, ſhe uſed no conciliating words. She reminded him of the written promiſe of marriage he had given her; and ſhe averred, by every thing ſacred, her reſolution to enforce

force it to the utmost extent of the law.—
His lordship was not tardy in his reply : he wrote,

“ My dearest life !

“ BEWARE, for your own sake, how you expose yourself, by producing to the world the nugatory bond you sold your fame for. A score of dames could rival you ; for I keep the form ready written, to distribute as I see occasion ; but I confess I have always found it a sufficient plea to declare under my hand, as I do now to you, my dear lady, that I am, and have been for upwards of fifteen years, a married man ; and that I shall continue, to my life’s end,

Your ladyship’s most grateful,
most faithful humble servant,
SURCHESTER.

“ P.S. My wife lodged, when I last heard of her, in one of the *wynds* near the Cowgate, Edinburgh ; and, I dare say, would answer any questions.”

Neither her spirits nor her strength could endure the mockery of this insult ; and, having on paper given vent to the overflowings of her passion, she took to her bed with a violent fever.

Her journey, and the necessity of paying a year's board, &c. in advance, to procure Miss Arabella's admission into the school she was placed at ; the figure she had thought it necessary to support at Bath, and the consequent expences of play, &c. that it led her into, joined to her natural want of oeconomy, had very much diminished the small sum she had secured for herself ; and, when her life was out of danger, and her faculties began to clear, she found her condition reduced nearly to that of want. Without spirits to concert new plans, and almost sickened of the world, now she had its hardships in view, she gave herself up to grief, and might have become an object of pity, even to those who best knew her failings. She repented most sincerely her
conduct

conduct towards Sir Clifford Byram, which had excluded her from every claim on him : she dreaded applying to her brother, knowing the cruel imposition by which she had injured him ; and, still retaining one spark of nature in her breast, she was fearful of hazarding her eldest daughter's certainty of a provision in that quarter.

In this dilemma she remained, unable to bow her mind to her miseries, till she was compelled to pay for her lodgings by a promissory note, to take up goods on credit, and at length to borrow ten guineas at a card table, whither, in a state of dreadful emaciation, she had been wheeled, that by some desperate chance she might retrieve her circumstances ; but the event deciding against her, she was compelled to think of some means by which she might subsist ; and, her objection to supplicating Lord Armathwaite being supported by *two* considerations, she preferred the only alternative she had, and in terms of the most abject humility,

humility, such as she thought would shame him into pity, she conjured Sir Clifford to save his son's widow from perishing for want.

The old man, still retaining in his nature all those dispositions which prompted him rather to deplore than to resent the injuries he received, had retired, rich and unhappy, to his seat in Northamptonshire, where, brooding over the calamities which had cut off his race before his eyes were closed, he referred all to his own impetuous zeal for Lambert's aggrandisement, and hated himself more than Lady Jemima. But his attorney, Laster, whose interest it was to keep all his relations aloof, never suffered his resentment entirely to expire, and could talk the venerable penitent into a rage, which dissolved away in yearnings of tenderness, as soon as he was left to the softness of his own nature.

It was Sir Clifford who had taken Dennis Geoghegan into his service, and the faithful fellow would often have pleaded for *Mijs Elizabeth*, had he not been prohibited, under pain of an immediate discharge, the mention of any one of Mr. Byram's family. But he had penetration enough to perceive that his master dared not trust his own heart for its firmness; and hoping that, at some favorable moment or other, he might succeed, he endeavoured to furnish himself with documents respecting her situation; and having traced her to Devonshire place, through the means of Captain S——, who had brought her over from Dublin, he had been at the pains of a journey to town, and it was he who had so awkwardly, in the ill-sustained character of a gentleman, applied for a certificate of her good behaviour.

Unable to comprehend the postscript which Ami Bonange, whoever that personage might be, had added to contradict
Mr.

Mr. Haccombe's intimations, he put the letter in his pocket, and the time he had asked for his journey to London having been considerably diminished by its pleasures, and his finances by its multifarious allurements, he was forced to take the first and cheapest conveyance he could find for his return. This happening to be the roof of a stage-coach, where he found two of his countrymen, they all got drunk by the way, and Dennis's pocket was picked of the very little money he had left, and of all the fruit of his expedition ; for he lost Mr. Haccombe's letter, and returned home in a state of riotous intoxication, that unfortunately happened first to offend, by opprobrious language, the dignity of the great Mr. Laffiter, who instantly brought him by the collar into the presence of his master, that he might improve the best opportunity he might ever have, of separating from Sir Clifford a domestic whose fidelity was an obstacle and a terror to himself.

Poor Dennis was dismissed his master's service while in a state that kept him ignorant of his misfortune. In the deepest woe he went the next morning to the clergyman of the parish, to beg his intercession. He procured it; but Sir Clifford remembered him in his drunkenness, and Lassiter took care he should think of nothing favorable to the honest fellow.

The parson, whose good nature was hurt at Dennis's wailings for the loss of his place, and who had had frequent opportunities of remarking his attachment to Sir Clifford, gave up unwillingly his hope of reinstating him; but, having exerted ineffectually his utmost endeavours, he was compelled, by his fears of uselessly displeasing Sir Clifford, to give up the point, and advise Dennis to seek another service, and keep himself more sober.

“ Dear sir,” answered Dennis to this friendly admonition, “ since I must not
serve

serve my dear kind hard-hearted master, would you have the goodness to please to let me be your servant? and thus, you see, if I am not near my dear master, I shall be close by him."

"No, no, Dennis:—you know I keep no servant but a cow-boy and a carter."

"Never mind, sir!—Let me be cow-boy!—I will come for just almost nothing; for what can I do? I have spent more money than I had, in going up to that same London, to seek a pretty little girl of my acquaintance that is a stranger to me; and I am here in a foreign country out of the king's dominions, and away from my own dear country and all my good friends, who could, as you may say, assist me; and I know they can do nothing for me, because I was always obliged to do for them.—Devil fetch them all, for letting me be a poor servant!"

The clergyman was moved ; and hoping that, at some future time, Sir Clifford might relent, he promised to retain Dennis, on condition his former master did not resent his interference, till he could provide himself with a place better suited to his more usually elevated notions.

On application, Sir Clifford granted the requisite permission, and declaring that he had no other enmity towards Dennis than his desire for peace (the only blessing he could now enjoy) obliged him to entertain, he authorized his friend the vicar to receive him, and pay him, on *his* account, his usual stipend, promising at the end of a year, if he behaved well, to admit him again into his family.—The contract stood, notwithstanding Mr. Lassiter's many representations against it ; and poor Dennis was sober, hopeful, and happy.

It was nearly at the time of this event that Lady Jemima's submissive letter, for want
of

of Lassiter's knowing her hand-writing, reached Sir Clifford. The old man could not forget her ill conduct ; and, on shewing his prime agent her petition, he was fully reminded of all her faults : but no malignity or argument could induce him to add to his poignant regrets those of conscious inhumanity. He sent her the immediate relief of one hundred pounds, with a promise of twice that sum annually, if she would consent to retire into Wales, and give him no future disturbance.

While waiting the return of the post, her ladyship had made an acquaintance with a young heir, of whom she had, in a fortunate evening, won upwards of four hundred pounds ; and she almost repented the concessions she had made. But the young pigeon having been warned off the stage, and her demands increasing daily, by the time Sir Clifford's donation arrived she was again hopeless, and in a disposition to accept it.—Under pretence of benefiting by
change

change of air, she negociated for a small house at Swansea; and in polite, if not sincere terms of acknowledgment, she professed herself ready to adopt Sir Clifford's proposed plan of oeconomy; and having honorably paid her debts, she removed, with as little delay as possible, to her new abode, freed, by her imposition on Lord Armathwaite, and by her advanced disbursements for her youngest daughter's maintenance, of all present care beyond herself.

CHAP. X.

The situation Lady Jemima had gained, despicable as she thought it, and stubbornly as she bowed to it, was felicitous, compared to that in which she had, by a fraud not to be forgiven, placed Lord Armathwaite, Joanna, and, by consequence, her sympathising friend Mrs. Halnaby. A very few hours acquaintance, with his travelling companion, had made his Lordship apprehend, that in presenting to Joanna a daughter, he should fix a new thorn in the wounded bosom of her he was most anxious to serve; and the event proved his conjecture right; for though he forbore relating any one of those circumstances that could best assist in forming an opinion of Miss Byram, Joanna, in the first quarter of an hour, perceived that all the airy hopes she
had

had cherished of being repaid for the sufferings of many, many years, by the virtues and filial affection of her daughter. In truth, Joanna had, like most of the world, formed her hopes too much on her wishes: she had figured to her imagination, while she waited Lord Armathwaite's return, the delight of clasping to her bosom a creature all loveliness, and of finding, in this one tie to society, all the cruelties of the world atoned for. In her conversations with Mrs. Halnaby, which were incessantly on the subject of her expectations, she always talked and planned, on the supposition of Elizabeth's perfect excellence; and however respectfully she received her more experienced friend's cautions against being too sanguine, she could not admit an idea of her fancy's erring.

How her daughter had been educated was a doubt with her; but she thought herself happy in recovering her at an age when she was still capable of instruction; and as

Lord Armathwaite had, immediately after his conference with his sister, written to Joanna the favorable account of the young lady's disposition which Lady Jemima had imposed on him, docility was not to be questioned. The too ardent parent supposed some *finishing* might be necessary to fit her for the circle she wished her to move in; this was the most she could allow; and she was not without hope, that Lady Jemima's care, which she contemplated with the utmost gratitude, might have superseded even this necessity.

Expecting, therefore, to see beauty, elegance, and virtue, even in the external of her daughter, and reckoning on her being, as in her babyhood she promised, extremely like Mr. Byram, she saw Lord Armathwaite's *avant courier* gallop up to the door, and his chaise, which had been one stage to meet him, following at full speed, with all the extacy of hope waiting its consummation. She could not remain where

she was to receive this darling of her heart: she flew to the chaise-side, and her eyes passing Lord Armathwaite too quickly to observe the expression of his features, she fixed them on his companion, of whom, however, in that situation, she could form no judgment.

Insensible to all but her child's return, she gave involuntarily one hand to Lord Armathwaite as he snatched it in alighting, and the other, in speechless agitation, she extended to Miss Byram, who, seemingly, attentive to nothing but her safe passage to the ground, obliged her to peep under her bonnet that she might see her face.

Joanna saw, and was delighted with her strong resemblance to her father; it was, indeed, as satisfactory a likeness as could be desired to ascertain a pedigree; but it was what a very faithful picture may be, a very bad copy. She had Byram's lineaments, with Lady Jemima's physiognomy;

and the temper of her mind operating on her countenance, had she had the beauty of the Medicean Venus, she must have wanted every charm the human countenance boasts : but against this discovery the fond mother's favorable prejudice was a sufficient blind for the moment.

She was not so tall as Joanna had imaged her in her own idea ; but this was of little consequence ; she walked imperfectly as she entered the house ; but perhaps she was cramped with the journey : she neither spoke nor shewed any sign of pleasure ; but this was owing to her fatigue. On entering a parlor, Joanna, bursting into tears, threw her arms round her neck, which expression of fondness Miss received with the gentle rebuke—" You'll tumble my hair, Ma'am"—and indeed, it would have been a pity to discompose the young lady's locks, which she had, at the last stage, powdered most furiously.

Joanna,

Joanna, impatient to present her to the sight of Mrs. Halnaby, who knew her only by report, and had purposely kept away, that she might be no restraint, begged Miss Byram to take off her cloak, and go with her to the next room. The young lady shewed her good manners by immediately obeying, and discovered, to Joanna's infinite disappointment, a pair of shoulders of such inequality, as annihilated all hope of personal elegance. She then set forward, on a brisk waddle, to be introduced to Mrs. Halnaby, and shewed at once what was the grace of her external.

Joanna was hurt ; but no farther than as what she had seen, confined her hopes to that she could not as yet judge of. She had not as yet heard Miss Byram say any thing decisive of her pretensions ; and a few moments more of observation would have made her fearful of receiving this farther satisfaction, lest with it another portion of her sanguine expectations should have withered.

Mrs. Halnaby saw Joanna's agitated mind on her quivering lips, and without waiting the formality of an introduction, she received the stranger as she would have welcomed a grand-daughter, while Miss, with a hand extended to each of the fond claimants, stared round the apartment in vacant abstraction, and in her deepest tones muttered, "*Thith itb not tho fine a bouth ath my mama'tb—am I to live here?*"—Joanna let fall the hand she had held, and Mrs. Halnaby, with a look that inquired how her friend bore her disappointment, desired the young lady to be seated.

"It *wath* very cold travelling," says Miss: "I thought it a long way."

"Yes, my dear," replied Joanna, stifling her feeling, "I was fearful you might suffer in the journey; but I was impatient to see you. Are you not glad, Elizabeth, to see your own mother?"

"Why

“ Why it *itb* my mother that *itb* in Dublin; I have no other mother.”

“ No, my love, Lady Jemima has been so kind as to educate you for me; but I am your mother, and you shall ever find me truly such.”

“ I like my own mama *betht*; but I can *itbay* here a little while.”

“ Yes, my love, you must stay with me — I hope I shall win your love in time.”

Lord Armathwaite, who had shunned the first interview, perhaps fearful of what it must be, then entered; and Joanna went out of the room with him, to express her cruel disappointment. He owned the young lady not very promising, but repeated the good character he had received her with, and gave Joanna hopes that all, or, at least, much, might be rectified by a correction of her education; but in pro-

portion as Joanna had been confiding, she was dejected, and nothing could now persuade her that her daughter was a being capable of improvement.

“ Suspend your judgment a little,” said Lord Armathwaite ; “ let us first find out her deficiencies ; and it will be a pleasure to supply them.”

They went together into the room where Mrs. Halnaby and Miss Byram were sitting ; and the first words that greeted Joanna’s ears, were an address from the newly-arrived stranger to her companion, on the subject of her work, which unfortunately happening to be *knitting*, offended Miss Byram’s notions of elegance.

“ What do you do *thuch* vulgar work for ? I would take you for a poor woman.”

“ I do it, my dear, because my eyes will not enable me to do fine works ; and it is very useful.”

“ *Useful !*

“ *Uttheful!*—how can it be *uttheful*? What, can’t you afford to buy *thttockingth*? My mama *alwayth wearth thilk.*”

“ They are useful to the poor, to whom I give them.”

“ What, give ’um away to poor people? I am *thure* if I did ’um I *thould* keep ’um for *mythelf.*”

Joanna could scarcely contain herself; “Gracious God!” she exclaimed, “how am I punished for my presumption!”—She checked herself; and it being about two o’clock, on the supposition that Miss Byram might stand in need of refreshment, a side-table was laid for her.

The footman who had placed it, came up to Mrs. Byram, and said that Mrs. Lewis wished very much that she might be allowed to see Miss.

“ I will ring for her in a minute,” replied Joanna. Then addressing herself to the young lady, she said, “ My dear, the servant who nursed you in your infancy is eager to see you. Will you go out to her? or shall she come hither to you?”

“ I don’t want to *thee* her,” said Miss.

“ O but you must;—it would be unkind to refuse her this pleasure.—She is an excellent creature, I assure you, and has almost broke her heart for the loss of you.” Joanna then rang the bell, and poor Nelly, now some years older, and elevated to the rank of housekeeper, with tears of joy burst into the room; but Miss Byram’s look was sufficient to bring her to her recollection; and having expressed her joy, and hoped she was well after her journey, she retired mortified.

“ Who *it* that?” asks Miss.

“ It

“ It is my housekeeper,” said Mrs. Halnaby rather stiffly.

“ *Housekeeper?*” re-echoed the young lady ; “ why our *housemaids* at home are *thmarter*.”

“ I do not love smart servants, said her mistress.”

“ No, *becausth* you are old ; but my mama *batb* all *thmart thervanth*.”

“ Your mama, as you call her, my dear, is a lady of fashion.”

“ And ar’nt you ?”

“ No, my dear, I am a plain elderly gentlewoman.”

“ *Yeth*, I *thee* that ; but you are rich.

“ Moderately so.”

“ And a’nt that other lady a lady of *fashion*? *The itb* a *real* lady, my mama told me.”

“ Have you ever been in England before ?” said Joanna, wishing to change the discourse.

“ But I *thay*,” resumed Miss Byram, peevish at not being answered, “ you live in *thtyle*, don’t you ?—you don’t *thtay* at *thith* dull *plaith* all the *fashionable* part of the year, do you ?—for that I *thall* not like.”

“ Have you ever been in London ?” said Mrs. Halnaby.

“ O *yeth*, often ; and in Dublin I *alwaith utht* to be of all *my mama’th partieth*.—I like *partieth*.”

“ But you have not begun yet to play cards, I suppose,” said Mrs. Halnaby.

“ O *yeth*,

“ O *yeth*, I have ;—my mama had my *governeth* to teach *uth*. ”

“ Where are the Miss Byrams now ? ”
said Joanna, in a melancholy tone.

“ *Mith Byramth* ?—there *ith* but one *Mith Byram bethide* me, and that *ith* my *thithter* Arabella. ”

“ I recollect now,” said Joanna, “ you know of no other ; but where is Miss Arabella ?—I am afraid you were very much grieved at leaving her. ”

“ Not I indeed ;—I don’t care for Arabella. ”

“ You see,” said Lord Armathwaite, the instinctive prevalence of nature : she felt, I dare say, no love for Arabella.

“ But she seems partial to Lady Jemima,”
said Joanna to him, in a low tone.

“ Yes,

“ Yes, I suppose she was won by her kindness; and that, I think, is a good sign.”

“ Did you know the other young person that was in Mr. Byram’s family?” said Joanna to her; “ I suppose you hardly called her sister.”

“ What? do you mean *Elizabetch? Thee wath a bathtard*, and I hate her ;—my mama bid me hate her.”

“ What for?” said Joanna, more frightened than ever.

“ Why *becauth thee wath a bathtard—* and *thee wath* the most *thpiteful detheitful* creature in the world.”

“ How do you know it?” said Lord Armathwaite; “ she did not live with you.”

“ No; but my mama told me *thee wath alwaitb thetting* my papa *againtht utb*, and *thee thpent* all my *papa’tb* money.

“ This

“ This is strange,” said Mrs. Halnaby.

The traveller’s little table was spread, and a cold boiled fowl and an apple tart waited her attention. Mrs. Halnaby inviting her to eat, she replied that she did not love boiled chicken, she liked it *roastbed*.

“ I am sorry for it,” Mrs. Halnaby answered ; “ I happen to have no other in the house—perhaps you will like the tart better.”

“ If it *itb* apple, I don’t like it ;—I like *damtkon* better.”

“ How unfortunate we are,” said Mrs. Halnaby, “ not to suit your palate!”

Many things were then proposed for the young lady’s eating ; but though she declared herself hungry, no one met her approbation. At last some preserved fruits were successful ; she would have some sweet wine,

wine, which she observed on, as being brought on a salver not so *banthome* as her *mama'th*; and she then bethought herself of her drefs, and asked who *wath* to wait on her.

The office of attending on Miss Byram, whenever she should arrive, had been bespoken by Joanna's Eleanor, who impatiently waited for the pleasure of asking her ten thousand questions: she was now called; but as her new mistress rose to leave the room, Mrs. Byram observing something hung about her neck, in hopes it might be a miniature of Lambert which she had been thus careful to trust only to her own person, stopped her to look at it, but nothing more than the suspending chain being in sight, she was obliged to ask permission, which Miss point blank refused, by saying nobody *thould thee* what it *wath*.

Mrs. Byram, in gentle terms, begged to be indulged.

“ What ?

“What? won’t you be angry at it?” Miss asked, with a look, that in one of lower life would have passed for an impudent grin.

“No, on my word,” said Joanna, keeping hold on the chain.

Um! “I thought you would,” said Miss, as she shrunk herself in to give the medal-lion liberty.

Mrs. Byram was thunderstruck when she saw on one side an agnus, and on the other, a head of the Virgin Mary.—“Good God! Elizabeth,” she exclaimed, “are you a papist?”

“I *thaid* you would be angry,” replied Miss Byram; “but I wore it to keep me *thafe* in the journey.”

“And have you any faith in its power?” interposed Lord Armathwaite, desirous a little to spare Joanna’s feelings.

“My

“ My *governeth* told me it would keep me *thafe*,” she replied.

“ What? had you a roman catholic governess ?” Mrs. Halnaby asked.

“ *Yeth*,” she replied---“ the *governeth* we had before, had a little *crim. con.* with the butler, *tho* my mama *wath* obliged to get *thomebody* in a hurry.”

“ *Crim. con.!*” repeated Mrs. Halnaby ; “ do you know, Miss Byram, what you are talking about ?”

“ O *yeth*,” she answered laughingly ; my *latht* *governeth* *utbed* to *thay* what a pity it *wath* that other *wath* not a Catholic, *becauth* then *thee* might have got *abtholuthion*, and nobody could have hurt her.

“ For heaven’s sake, go and dress,” said the half-distracted Joanna.

“ What

“What, am I a figure?” says Miss, as she went out of the room, not at all aware of Mrs. Byram’s meaning.

Joanna’s grief was not to be restrained any longer than till the cause of it was out of hearing; nor was it in the power of Lord Armathwaite or Mrs. Halnaby to offer her any other consolation than a hope that a new mode of treatment might retrieve the unfortunate girl.

“But,” said Joanna, “what ground is there for hope? She has not only shewn her total want of every external recommendation, but she has no heart—she has no morality.”

“Let us, however, wait a few days,” said the Earl, “and see whether these deficiencies, which perhaps are more in appearance than in reality, may not be in some way supplied.”

“They

“ They can *never* be supplied,” answered Joanna emphatically. “ The girl, who at seventeen has no heart, is very little likely to find one.—Good God ! what will my future life be ? ”

“ *Happy* it would be, could I make it so,” said Lord Armathwaite.

“ Of that I am convinced,” said Joanna ; “ but this is a misfortune we could not expect.”

“ Let us share it together, and it will be lessened,” he replied.

“ You have my promise,” she answered, “ and in truth and honor I am bound to fulfil it. I cannot say you have not found and restored to me my daughter—you could not make her other than she is. I owe you every thing ; you have from my infancy had my heart, and broken as it is, it is still your’s.”

“ And

“ And with that certainty,” answered his Lordship, “ will I rest contented, till I see your peace in some degree restored.”

“ You will oblige me by doing so,” she replied; “ for at present I can think only of this untoward girl.”

Dinner had not waited above half an hour, when Miss Byram made her appearance, dressed as if she thought nothing was wanting to her good reception but finery, yet without the smallest pretensions to taste or even to neatness; far less did she consult her unfortunate person. She had, early as it was after Mr. Byram's death, discarded all appearance of mourning; and above all she had, with *unequal*, but, it must be confessed, unbounded liberality, *rouged* her cheeks; and a row of trumpery beads round her neck shifting their place a little, discovered, that in aid of her complexion she used the more deleterious composition of white lead.

Dinner

Dinner passed with new disgusts every moment: the cloth was removed, and it was proposed that the company should adjourn to a room where they might judge of Miss Byram's musical attainments, of which she had given rather a favourable idea in her conversation, and her performance, excepting that it was deficient in *precision*, and *taste*, was *passable*, that is to say, she scrambled through a cramp lesson *somehow*; and when asked to sing, she squalled most dissonantly and most ignorantly the evening hymn to the Virgin—a sweet composition certainly, but not the best calculated just then to give pleasure.

“ I suppose, Elizabeth,” said Joanna
 “ you will not choose to go to church
 with us.”

“ Oh, *ath* for that I don't care—one
plaith ith ath good *ath* another to me. I
 like church *betht* indeed, *becauth* there are
 more of the *tippieth* there.”

“ The

“ The *tippieth*, indeed !” replied Mrs. Halnaby, indignant at her cant.

Not knowing how otherwise to amuse her, and unwilling at present to begin with coercion, whist was proposed for the evening. Miss wanted to bet, but no one choosing to take her up, she was forced to play the plain game, which she did, not only with the finesse of a gamester by profession, but with all the cunning of a naturally disingenuous mind, inaccurate as to her score, and always supposing it more than it was. She had, in dudgeon, learnt that she was to play for no more than shillings, but in still greater dudgeon did she pay the few she had lost.

Joanna was determined to postpone all lecture till the morning. Having, therefore, suffered her to eat what she could not approve for her supper, and indulged her desire for *a fire in her room, a warm bed,*

bed, and somebody to sleep in her apartment for fear of ghosts, she dismissed her with her blessing and a bleeding heart to her rest.

CHAP. XII.

It was impossible for Joanna to close her eyes all night. She sat up till very late with Lord Armathwaite and Mrs. Halnaby, conversing on the unpromising prospect, and then retired to ruminate on the best means of remedying these sad defects, which she feared lay deeper than in Miss Byram's education.

She resolved, as the only means of gaining influence over her, to endeavor attaching her by kindness, but at the same time to put the earliest possible check on her follies.

Unwilling to break her rest, after her long fatigue, she suffered her to remain in bed till near noon the following day, and

complied with her desire to have her breakfast before she rose. Between one and two, the fair lady made her appearance, to the additional mortification of her expecting friends; for the cosmetics of the former day remained in sad disorder on her complexion, and the utmost flattertnliness of morning deshabille disgraced her person.—She went to the windows, and observed on the dullness of the place. She enquired if there were no genteel families near; and how the people, that *were buried there*, did for balls, routs, plays, &c.

Joanna, with the chill of death over her, could give her no favorable answer. She owned that Chartham was not a very gay place, but that it was nevertheless possible to make it agreeable.—Miss remarked, in reply, that it was as bad as her papa's house in the north of Ireland; and the wretched mother, all impatience to begin some scheme of rectification, taking Miss Byram's hand and seating her by her, while to disguise

guise her agitation she attempted to continue the work she had in hand, began to talk seriously to her of her new situation, and assuring her in the kindest terms of her sincere affection, and that her happiness depended only on herself, she conjured her to shew a docile spirit, and to endeavor at correcting some visible faults in her conduct :—faults, Joanna observed, for which not so much she, as those who had had the care of her education, were responsible.—She first intreated her, if she had any regard for her health, or the estimation of her friends, to discontinue the odious practice of making an artificial complexion.

Miss stoutly and unblushingly denied that her complexion was not her own. She said, the fire always caught her face, and gave her a color ; but that was all.

This was sufficiently discouraging ; but Joanna soon found that there was no point of admonition she could touch on without

stirring up some one of the evil qualities of her pupil's mind ; and, quite discouraged, she left off preaching, to enquire what attained accomplishments she had.

An investigation of this sort only served to prove that she had no habits of industry, no pursuits, no preferences :—*reading trash* seemed to have occupied the greatest portion of her time, next, it may be supposed, to dress. She had *heard* of all things, but could not *do* any thing, and affected to undervalue, as extremely easy, whatever modern education rendered requisite to elegance. But all these vexations Joanna, in her lowered hopes, would have borne patiently, could she have discovered the least ray of native integrity in the mind of her she deemed her daughter.

It was evident that the young lady had been committed wholly to the care of bad servants, who had fostered all her low vices, and kept her utterly ignorant of what she
ought

ought to have been ; and a fortnight's trial, in which time was procured for her every amusement, except such as would have exposed her, that the far from *dull* city of Canterbury could afford, was sufficient to damp every expectation. Still, however, the matter was not given up ; and if Miss Byram happened, with a view to carrying any point, to be in better humor than ordinary, the family had hopes of her amendment. She was kept, per force, out of the kitchen, and from that which she seemed to have a great inclination to—conversation with the footmen ; and no servant but Lewis was allowed to speak to her :—poor disappointed Lewis ! whom nothing could persuade that this was the being she had so anxiously nursed, and so unfortunately lost from her care.--Happy would it have been for Joanna, could she have doubted : but the supposed impossibility of any change prevented her suspicions ; and the resemblance to Mr. Byram, which grew still more obvious on farther acquaintance, would

have lulled every suspicion, had any arisen ; for the last thing thought on, would have been Lady Jemima's so far sacrificing the maternal sentiment, as to give up her child.

The consequence of Joanna's disappointment and incessant anxiety, was bodily illness ; and Mrs. Halnaby, who detested Miss Byram, took care to inform her that she was the cause of her mother's indisposition, and that she thought it very probable, unless she mended her conduct, it might be the cause of her death.—“ Then I hope I shall get away from *this nasty plaith*,” answered Miss.

Joanna's illness increased to a serious degree, and the apprehensions of her friends increased in proportion. Lord Armathwaite had written to his sister, first to inform her of his safe arrival with his young charge, and afterwards giving some hints of her untowardly disposition, but receiving no answer,

fier, he now again wrote very earnestly, condemning, in the bitterness of his heart, the shameful negligence that had educated only for misery, a creature so ill-conditioned, and still more reproaching his sister for the false character she had given of Elizabeth Byram. Finding all this unavailing, and, though hopeless of doing any thing by exertion, miserable in inaction, he resolved on an interview with his sister, whom he supposed still in Dublin, and accordingly set out for Ireland ; but there he found his labor unavailing.—No one he enquired of knew, no one seemed to care, what was become of Lady Jemima Byram :—he could only hear it conjectured that Lord Surchester might have taken her into keeping ; and, in such quarters as those his lordship might have provided her, he thought it must be useless, and he was sure it must be equally infamous and painful, to seek her. He therefore returned in despair, and found Joanna some steps nearer the grave than when he left her, and her sup-

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posed

posed daughter a greater torment than ever.

As a visitation from Heaven, intended for some wise but inscrutable purpose, she would have submitted to, and sunk under, the dreadful affliction that completed the miseries of her life ; but neither the friendship of Mrs. Halnaby, nor the tender affection of Lord Armathwaite, could endure this inversion of the order of things, that the person receiving every benefit should be the destruction of the benefactor. All that reasoning could do had been tried in vain, by every one of those interested in Miss Byram's conduct ; and every appeal to sensibility, or the common feeling of the lowest class of rational beings, had been equally ineffectual.

Miss Byram had shewn no curiosity as to the unusual events that had so long separated her from the person now claiming her ; but Joanna had informed her, with
as

as much tenderness as possible to the memory of her father, that he had early in life married without the privity of his friends, and had been afterwards compelled to a match with Lady Jemima ; that she was the issue of this former marriage, and now, by the death of her father, restored to her surviving parent, who would with rapture procure for her every advantage of a far more eligible situation than that she had been taken from, provided she would do what was in her power to merit it. On the other hand, she was told that, should she disappoint the wishes of her friends, the being boarded with strangers, in the cheapest and most obscure manner, was the best she had to expect.

The young lady, it must be confessed, did not turn a deaf ear to these alternatives. She listened attentively to the bribe held out to her, and enquired into every particular that her avarice or her vanity could suggest ; but, finding that most of her

gratifications were to be purchased by desert, she was not greatly allured by the prospect.

In her own private opinion, she was not the person her new friends imagined her : she could not believe herself not to be Lady Jemima's daughter ; but not caring, in the smallest degree, for her real parent, and remembering that one, and not the least cogent, of Lady Jemima's arguments to induce her to leave her, was her utter inability to provide for her, she was very well contented to leave all parties in their error, provided she herself benefited by it : but admonition succeeding to admonition, her injurious indulgences being curtailed, an industrious use of her time being exacted, and above all every pleasure, even the going to London, being postponed till she shewed signs of a good disposition, her patience flagged, and wherever Lady Jemima might be, as she had no idea of her
being

being so low as she really was, she wished herself with her.

In the beginning of May, her conduct, in every particular, became so disgraceful, and Joanna's situation was rendered so precarious by it, that Lord Armathwaite, who waited only some symptoms of her recovery to urge her giving him a title to protect her; and Mrs. Halnaby, who was equally anxious, lest she herself should be taken from her, to see her united to the only comforter the world could then afford her, insisted on her exerting her spirit against this new misfortune, and regarding alone her own more important health: and, as the only means of giving a respite to her daily mortification, and of reclaiming the depraved girl, it was proposed that she should be sent for one year to a good school, and that in the mean time her mother should try what change of scene and air could do towards the re-establishing her own health.

The affection with which her best friends urged this plan, gave Joanna an interest in its success. She thought, if the place of her daughter's abode were well chosen, it afforded the greatest hope of retrieving her; and the sea air having been strongly recommended for herself, she consented to go to the coast for a few weeks, and, should she find the expected benefit, to postpone her marriage only till her return.

Her heart was somewhat lightened by having made this determination; and having, while she lived in the neighbourhood of London, had opportunities of observing the uncommonly excellent discipline of a most respectable boarding-school in the village she lodged in, she decided on sending Elizabeth thither; and the next day acquainted the young lady with her plan.

It met all the opposition that might reasonably be expected from an indolent girl, who saw she must now be employed.

Miss

Miss complained, cried, scolded, and at last threatened ; but all in vain, for her sorrow was not accompanied with what Joanna had hoped for—a promise of reformation. A letter therefore was immediately written to the governess of the school, stating very frankly the difficult task assigned her, and the importance of her accepting it, offering her at the same time whatever pecuniary compensation she judged adequate to such a trouble.

It was necessary, while waiting the completion of this negociation, to keep Miss Byram almost a close prisoner ; for she had given some intimations of an intention to run away.—A joyful measure ! could poor Joanna have been easy in neglecting her.

Unfortunately, though the governess of the school had been, after many scruples, prevailed on to admit Miss Byram, she could not receive her till after the Midsummer vacation : this protracted the sufferings

ferings of the family till the last week in July, when Miss had her face thoroughly washed and her hair combed out of powder, and was put into Lord Armathwaite's chaise, he having undertaken the formidable office of delivering her safe.—His affairs, neglected for the sake of Joanna, called him away, and he proposed to return about the time she revisited Chartham.

The same day the two ladies set off for the sea-coast.

CHAP. XIII.

PEREGRINA lived not three weeks in Lady Cottisbrooke's family, before she discovered the jealousy and malignity with which Lady Almerina Delaford was endeavouring to remove her. It was Lady Cottisbrooke's benevolent wish to consider the three young women she had the care of as her friends, and as friends to each other; and nothing was wanting on her part to realize the idea. Not inattentive to the world's distinctions, though in her own heart regarding them little, she paid due respect to the rank of Lady Almerina Delaford; but the countess-elect saw with mortification and envy, that however scrupulous Lady Cottisbrooke was in her etiquette, Peregrina possessed by much the larger share of her affection; and that
often

often when in their walks she omitted not the *ceder le pas* to her, she was linked arm in arm with Peregrina, with eyes intent on the beautiful motion of her lips, and the expression of her features while she spoke.

Lady Almerina had too much penetration to be satisfied with the pageant she was treated with ; and however justly and inevitably regard was bestowed on merit, and approbation followed laudable exertion, her spirits would not brook it. Another subject of mortification irritated her : she had, on first coming to Lady Cottisbrooke's, undertaken, as a very easy matter, the fixing Lady Effex's attention to music, reading, &c. &c. but a week's trial had convinced her, if not of her presumption, of her pupil's incapacity ; and she gave up the effort. Peregrina had been at least so far successful, as to win Lady Effex's love, and to keep her employed for some hours in the morning ; and for this Lady Cottisbrooke felt extremely grateful,

grateful, while Lady Almerina, by malicious insinuations, and by catechising the silly girl before her mother in a way that must have terrified and embarrassed her, endeavored to shew that Peregrina's abilities were not greater than her own. Through this, however, Lady Cottisbrooke penetrated, and attributing it to a pique of juvenile emulation, she passed it over in silence.

Those unfortunate rivalries which spring up between female candidates for admiration at public amusements, had never disturbed the peace of Peregrina, who in her most negligent hilarity did not forget that her situation took from her every claim to particular regard. She had, while in London, been often flushed with the compliments bestowed on her person; nor was she as insensible to its advantages as when she crossed the Irish channel; but even in her short observation of the world, she had learnt, that if a young woman has
only

only her beauty to boast, she has a small chance of listening to flatterers with impunity. She had seen many, in her idea far preferable to herself, but nearly as destitute of friends and fortune, either beguiled to their ruin, or deluded into hopes that were designed to end in disappointment. She had seen many grow vain on the notice of a superior coxcomb, and fall into contempt when neglected; and determining that she would never add one to this number, she had heard all, but believed none. For herself she had no views; the future was a chaos to her;—she still thought it impossible to marry without love, and to love without a return; and in the circle she had moved in, seeing no one whom she could love with a hope of being beloved, she had kept her heart perfectly safe in its integrity. She therefore, when obliged by Lady Cottisbrooke's urgency to make one in their engagements, to frequent the balls, the concerts, the plays, the libraries, &c. went with no other view than that of
being

being amused; and as, preferring sentiment to fashion, it was her intention not to lay aside her mourning for Mr. Byram till the year was expired, she was no competitor in dress; she had no emulation, no anxiety.

But Peregrina was one of those—shall we call them *favoured* beings? whom nothing can divest of the power of charming; and though the rank of Lady Almerina Delaford and of Lady Effex Courtland might secure the attention of the punctilious peer or the assiduous *honorable younger branch*, men of this description were few; and the attraction of loveliness proved stronger than of title. Lady Effex was too indiscriminating, and indeed too good-natured, to be jealous; but it wounded Lady Almerina's pride deeply to see the homage of all the most fashionable men directed to a plebeian altar. That her hand was engaged for life to Lord Cotisbrooke was no counterbalance to the mortifica-

mortification of being, for a few hours, condemned, by her rank, to teach Lord Lubberkin or Sir Harry Heavyside which was his right hand, or how to shift his place. She felt oppressed by an indefinible superiority, which never failed to mortify and irritate her.

On the contrary, Lady Cottisbrooke, who considered her ward as disposed of much to her advantage, and who never intended her daughter to marry till she could find a man disposed to be very kind to her foibles, would have been extremely gratified could she, by the influence of her rank and estimation, have bestowed Peregrina in marriage on some one who could prefer beauty and merit to money and pedigree; and for this reason, satisfied that she did no injury to the pretensions of her other two young ladies, she never failed to introduce her to notice; and such notice as her's, while it placed its object in a most favorable point of view, made many a man a serious

serious admirer who had meant only a little flirting.

The arrival of the Affingtons diverted Lady Almerina's attention; and in the credit and authority she obtained by introducing such rich young ladies to her admiring friends, she found some retribution for her frequent mortifications. None of the Affingtons were handsome enough to excite envy, and, like the rest of the world, despising the advantage they had in possession, and sighing after what they could not obtain, they saw no charm in their wealth, but sighed for the distinction of title. They thought Lady Almerina, with only fifteen hundred pounds, and Lady Effex, with not three ideas, far happier beings than themselves.

Peregrina, remembering their kindness to her in London, rejoiced at their arrival, and had no reason to complain of their coolness in accepting her congratulation.

They *really* liked the dear little girl vastly—Harriet declared she *quite* loved her—she was a charming, amiable, modest, humble, *inoffensive* character; and ————— we all know how our vanity is gratified by the ostentation of protecting what may in time reflect credit on us; but let the *protegée* beware how she dares put herself in competition with us.

Lady Almerina was not so negligent to her own interests as to omit giving *the dear Affingtons* some useful hints; and at their return home from the rooms the first ball night, Peregrina, had she been quick-sighted, might have perceived things not very pleasant; for she and Lady Effex were the only two of the party that had danced; gentlemen were, owing to a great dinner at St. Sebastian's, extremely scarce. Lady Almerina, who knew that the marquis, for whom she had, at her birth-day gala, laid snares, was of the party, was determined to reserve her hand till his arrival,

rival, which in the morning he had promised her could not be late when she was his attraction. Miss Affington, sufficiently repaid by being allowed to promenade with Lady Almerina, would not have danced had she been asked, till her friend was engaged. The buzz ran round the room that her ladyship waited for the marquis, and report, with her hundred echoes, soon gave it out that not only her ladyship, but the three ladies in silver muslins with her, waited the re-inforcement from St. Sebastian's. They had no opportunity offered them of contradicting the error; and they sat down, and paraded, and laughed, and fretted all the evening; for the noble marquis had irrevocably forgotten, in some excellent Burgundy, the promise he had given.

In the mean time Lady Essex danced with the youngest lad in the room, the son of an intimate friend, whose wish coincided with Lady Cottisbrooke's, that her
daughter

daughter should not change her partner during the ball. Miss Lamorne had been engaged half a dozen deep ever since the last ball, and none of her knights failed of the assignation.

But a greater pleasure than any these victories could afford her, and a greater compensation than she needed against the childish ill humor she excited, was conveyed to her in the frequent correspondence of Ami Bonange, to whom, without reserve, she communicated all that respected her present situation; and who never failed to give her the best intelligence, the best advice, and the most encouraging approbation. He was still mysterious, but wonderfully well informed of all that passed, and more earnest than ever in his expressions of deep interest in her welfare.

In two days after the arrival of the Asfingtons, Captain Courtland joined them, on a day and at an hour Ami Bonange had

had predicted: he looked ill, and very much emaciated; and at meeting again Miss Lamorne, whom he had so fortunately rescued, he shewed a degree of joy which was variously construed. Lady Almerina and Miss Assington decided on his being violently attached to Miss Lamorne. Harriet, his intended bride, knew too well the importance of her riches to him to believe his heart could swerve, while Marianne, the youngest and the prettiest, and who had long wished herself Harriet, saw in it *nothing more than common*, but perceived very plainly that he cared not for her sister; and on these slender promises founded the conclusion that it was not impossible to attract him to herself.

Far different from all these opinions was that of Peregrina, who fancied, at the moment of his address to her, that she had at length discovered her secret friend and correspondent, Ami Bonange. She knew he had been entered of the university of

Oxford, which might give him connexions there: he was a scampering young man, scarcely ever two days in a place; and nothing that she could recollect ever entirely contradicting the possibility of his being at Oxford or at Canterbury when her letters were dated, she decided on the point to her own satisfaction, but resolved to be cautious in her conduct.

All Lady Cottisbrooke's endeavours were directed towards amusing the Miss Affingtons, who received her civilities, and conducted themselves in a way that Peregrina soon saw gave her ladyship no pleasure; for spirited up by Lady Almerina, one half of their gaiety was calculated to mortify the unoffending *protégée*; and they had not been one week in the house, before Lady Cottisbrooke, in a quarter of an hour's stolen conversation with her favorite, hinted at the little satisfaction their company gave her, and, with a sigh, lamented that Hamilton's narrow fortune

made

made it necessary he should seek a wife with money.

Indeed it was to be lamented; for it was but too plain, that however prudence, or deference for his mother's judgment, might dispose docile Captain Courtland towards Harriet Affington, and she of the three was his favorite, yet he did not entertain for her those sentiments that promised happiness in their union; and the airs she gave herself on the strength of their engagement, the contempt with which it was her amusement to treat him, and the command all the three sisters affected to have over him, could neither be unobserved by common sagacity, nor borne by a liberal spirit.

Every day still farther confirmed Peregrina's suspicion of his being her *good genius*; and her receiving a letter from Canterbury during his visit, was no contradiction, as he generally rode over there,

with his friend Bergholt, three or four times in a week. In her next reply she hinted that she thought herself in possession of the secret; but fearful of offending, she added, that now he had such frequent opportunities of seeing her, she left it to him either to continue to act on the reserve, or to receive those acknowledgements she should ever be happy to pay him.

After his next visit to Canterbury, where she supposed he would meet her letter, she more intently watched him, and was still farther convinced by the increased interest of his behavior to her. Indeed, whether right or wrong in this conjecture, Peregrina might, had she not been defended by her simplicity and humility, have been seriously alarmed at his deportment, which was so strongly indicative of a very ardent passion for her, that even Harriet Affington, confident as she was in her own riches, and the softer Marianne, who was
always

always deeply in love with the last man that had been civil to her, could not shut their eyes against the conviction; and Lady Cottisbrooke herself might have been suspicious, had not Lady Almerina, before any thing of the kind was visible to eyes not sharpened by malignity, assured her of the fact with a degree of earnestness that made her own interestedness in the slander a reason for disbelieving it; but Lady Cottisbrooke had the highest reliance on Hamilton's honor: she had his word, that since he saw it would give her pleasure, Harriet Assington should be his wife; and she was therefore not only perfectly easy on that head, but not displeased sometimes to see the Assingtons a little taken down by Hamilton's leaving them to escort themselves, and bestowing his attentions on her they seemed assiduous in neglecting. Seeing clearly Harriet's faults, she was glad to perceive that her son understood the art of managing her temper.

CHAP. XIV.

THE party was again increased, but in a way not very pleasant to Peregrina; for Hamilton brought home with him, on this return from Canterbury, Sir Edward Berg-holt, who in some pet had soon quitted his boarding-house at Margate, and was living about the country, at a loss to suit himself. —Lady Cottisbrooke received him, as she always did the friends of her son, with hospitality and smiles; and, though he came with an intention of remaining but a few days, she prevailed on him not at present to seek another abode.

He was much more rational and steady than Peregrina had ever seen him; and he soon proved himself an agreeable addition to the family. Peregrina could have no
remaining

remaining suspicion that he favored the Haccombes; for, to her first question after them, he replied, “ *Let us pass such characters over in silence!* ” She therefore forbore again to mention them; and it was not long before she had reason to believe that he had developed the family iniquity, and broken sweet Mrs. Barnby’s fetters: for Mariannne Affington’s Circassian countenance seemed to have charms for him; and he returned, if he did not encourage, the languishing attractions which, as the last unmarried man she had popt on, were his due.

Compared with Captain Courtland, Sir Edward Bergholt, though less admired by *the misses*, was an important conquest, should he recover the perfect use of his reason; for he must shortly come into a very fine income, such as would maintain a peerage; a beautiful seat in the centre of the kingdom waited for him to inhabit it; his family was very ancient; his connex-

ions were very great, and alienated from him only by his father's absurd partiality for the new nabob Haccombe; and the lady he should marry must instantly enjoy a title, that did not herd with the vulgar *Mrs. Simkinsons* and *Mrs. Hodgkinsons*.

These weighty considerations shook *Harriet's* firmness, and she could not patiently observe her younger sister's chance. She treated *Courtland* worse than ever, put herself eternally in *Sir Edward's* way, and having once heard him say that, though he did not think very highly of *Miss Lamorne's* person or attractions, he liked her honesty and good temper, she became vastly fond of *Peregrina*, and proportionably cross to *Marianne*.

They had proceeded thus jockeying and jarring for some days, *Sir Edward's* attentions towards *Marianne* increasing, *Captain Courtland* taking advantage of *Harriet's* ill humor to attach himself to *Miss Lamorne*,
and

and the giving him every opportunity of confessing himself the person she supposed him, when, without any other previous notice than a servant on horseback preceding a post-chaise, just as they were rising from dinner one afternoon, entered the earl of Cottisbrooke, who was supposed by his family to have been then at Turin or Naples.

The surprise of seeing him thus unexpectedly, was almost too much for his mother's spirits; and while Lady Almerina courted his notice by a familiar nod and an extension of her hand, and the Affingtons bridled to be seen by *the lord*, Lady Essex and Peregrina were endeavoring to quiet the agitation of his mother's joy. It was some minutes before she could enquire the reason of his sudden return; and she seemed much gratified to hear that it was a report of her ill health, and consequent retreat to Margate, that had occasioned his precipitate journey: he said, his fears had been

relieved, on his landing at Dover, by the account he there procured of her; that his stay would be short, unless she thought, as he did, that he had seen enough of foreign nonsense; that his tutor waited at Calais, where he had left him, either to proceed again with him, or to accompany another English *milord* going his route.—Lady Cottisbrooke was satisfied and pleased: and well she might be so; for it was the first instance of filial affection she had ever received from this son, who had quitted England an impenetrable blockhead, but seemed to have returned something else—what it was, time was to discover.

His garb and fashion were entirely exotic. His person was diminutive, his complexion extremely dark, and his nose and chin kept at due distance only by a very wide mouth with thin lips and a more than commonly good set of teeth. An odd twist of his figure made it questionable whether he was
perfectly

perfectly strait; and every motion of his limbs evinced how great care had been requisite to preserve him, in his infancy, from the rickets.

The contracted sagacity which marked his brow was increased by the incessant application of the glafs, which enabled him to discern distant objects. He had a chattering volubility, and a decision of emphasis, that might impose; but he seldom knew his own meaning, or could enable any one else to decypher it:—what his pursuits and passions were, was not to be developed in an interview. Finding the party engaged to the evening dance at the rooms, he summoned his valet, who had travelled in the chaise with him; and prepared to accompany them.

Whatever might be Lady Almerina's private opinion of her betrothed husband, she exerted all the importance that her right

to him gave her, and, not chusing to see that he had bestowed very little notice on her at his entrance, she was inflated with the eclat of her situation when she had to exhibit him.

Her exultation continued, to the annoyance of all that came in her way, till she saw her friend, the negligent appointment-forgetting marquis, enter the room, who, making up to her, and not knowing Lord Cottisbrooke, protested *upon his soul, how grieved he was for the infernal accident that had deprived him of the celestial felicity of attending her flattering commands.*

Seated between the two noblemen, not knowing yet how she liked the travelled man, but certain that it was a delightful thing to be a duchess, she bestowed the far greater part of her attention on him who had the least claim to it ; and Lord Cottisbrooke might have been offended, had he
been

been in the humor ; but he was otherwise occupied.

Miss Affington herself, who had till now fired at random amongst the rank and file of single men, was this evening furnished with a mark to aim at ; for having been sufficiently in Lady Almerina's councils, to know that she thought it *a delightful thing to be a duchess*, she had some hopes of succeeding to her cast-off lover, should the slender marquis cause a breach between the contracting parties. Her height and figure, she thought, counterbalanced the more striking disadvantages of a bad complexion and disproportioned features ; and recollecting the advantage of her money, she had no small hope that, as *such things had been, such things might be*.

On Miss Lamorne, who in the confusion of his entrance had not been introduced to him, and whose name he learnt as it were
by

by chance, Lord Cottisbrooke bestowed no attention that could give offence. In the arrangement for the first dances, Hamilton Courtland engaged her; and though as earnest as possible to improve the opportunity into conversation, and in a very serious if not melancholy mood, she could get no satisfaction on the one point of doubt.—She thought him a finished piece of prudence: she wondered at his retention: she gave him credit for superior abilities.—How little did she think of her own power over him!

Lord Cottisbrooke had taken up, as form commanded him, with Lady Almerina: Sir Edward Bergholt had seized on Marianne Affington: Captain Courtland had asked a friend to take Harriet; and the elder Miss Affington sat still by Lady Cottisbrooke and Lady Essex, who, as being to bathe the next morning, was not allowed to dance. In the lottery of the amusement,
 Lord

Lord Cottisbrooke attached himself to this elder of the three fatal sisters, and her hope was fast growing up into faith, while Lady Almerina, who wished much to be at an early certainty, played all her artillery against the slender person, and still more slender intellects, of the slender marquis.

The family-party now seemed to have each their respective parts assigned them; and, in their domestic scenes, they supported them with tolerable propriety. It seemed almost a settled point that Lord Cottisbrooke, whom every revolving hour shewed more and more a *petit maitre*, and whose ignorance of what he had been purposely to see was most ludicrously glaring, should diverge towards the wealthy Miss Affington, that Lady Almerina should accept in his stead the marquis, who had by degrees introduced himself at Lady Cottisbrooke's, that Sir Edward Bergholt should take to gentle Marianne; and, for want of
another

another object, Harriet was compelled to continue, at least in supposition, the property of Captain Courtland.—For Lady Effex, no one was laid out ; and as for poor Peregrina, though she had many in her suite, and some that looked a little serious, it was *supposed*, because it was *hoped*, that a girl without a penny, and *whom nobody knew, but as a kind of unpensioned governess or vice-deputy companion* to Lady Effex, could not possibly have any acceptable offer from the superior ranks.

While matters were in this state, Peregrina received a letter from Ami Bonange, in which her having made the discovery was noticed ; and she was told that if, at the next opportunity of their unwitnessed conversation, she would *express a wish for a developement*, and would promise to be as *secret as her friend was sincere*, she should be gratified.

She

She waited some days for this opportunity, fearful of taking any step that might endanger her; and in the mean time the slender marquis left the sea-coast in a hurry, to repair to his father's castle, where awaited him the hand of beauty, wealth, and political influence. — Lady Almerina was thunder-struck; but knowing full well the ridicule she should meet with, if clamorous, she very prudently took in her sails, and coasted round again to Lord Cottisbrooke, justling most cruelly in her way the too sanguine Miss Affington, who with difficulty postponed giving vent to the rancor of her disappointment.

CHAP. XV.

PEREGRINA saw all this in silence, and, feeling no interest in their squabbles, with indifference. She recollected Ami Bonange's predictions concerning the Affingtons, and was comforted that she had not been betrayed into confidence or friendship. She was more intent on getting an audience of Captain Courtland ; and an opportunity offered when she least expected it ; for as she was sitting one morning with Lady Essex, endeavoring to make her understand why she always saw the sun set toward the west, he opened the room-door, and taking advantage of his sister's sitting with her back towards him, he with a respectful motion of his hand beckoned Miss Lamorne out. She made an excuse to her pupil, and quitting the room, saw him waiting on the

the

the stairs for her. She followed in some palpitation, but yet delighted with the idea of acknowledging, in person, services so important, and a correspondence so consolatory as that of Ami Bonange.

Not questioning the errand she came on, she suffered Hamilton to turn the key in the door of the little parlor, to which he introduced her, without any opposition from her prudence; and with a smile, and a little hesitation that kept her silent, she stood before him in a posture of attention. She perceived now, that his countenance was more disturbed than was adequate to the cause—and she still was silent.

Almost breathless, he began :

“ My dearest Miss Lamorne, forgive my rudeness!—I have no excuse but the extremity I am driven to!—I could not leave this place without speaking to you. —I am called instantly to my regiment;
and

and it is possible our destination may be to the French coast, or to the West Indies."

"I am sorry for it with all my heart, sir. —What a loss I shall sustain!"

"*You* will sustain! —Do I hear you say so? —Do you, Miss Lamorne, say so?"

"Certainly," she replied with a faltering voice, "it is of great importance to me, for you have been an invaluable friend. —I certainly wish for the developement I now expect from you; and I give you my word to be as secret as you are sincere."

"Then I am indeed happy!" he replied, clapping his hands together with energy. —"My friendship for you, Miss Lamorne, makes me more than ever anxious —"

Hasty footsteps interrupted the dialogue. Hamilton jumped through the window into the

the garden. Peregrina, in trepidation, hastily unlocked the door, and took up the news-paper ; and in came Marianne Asfington, in violent commotion.

It was evident that she had been in tears, and Peregrina begged to know what had distressed her.

“ My dear Lamorne,” she replied, “ I am in the deepest affliction possible ; and nothing that I can think on, except your interference, can assist me.”

Peregrina begged her to relieve her anxiety, by telling her how she could serve her.

“ I must first,” answered Marianne, shutting the door, “ entrust you with an important secret—a secret of great importance to me.—Sir Edward has a tenderness for me ; and I have been so unfortunate, by some reserve I perhaps carried too far,
to

to offend him. He is going away almost directly with Courtland ; and I cannot," added she, bursting into a roar of crying—" I cannot endure the thoughts of his going away angry with me."

" I am extremely sorry," replied Peregrina ; " but—but really I do not see how it is in my power to prevent Sir Edward's going, or to--to-to——"

Peregrina had too much delicacy even to *suggest* the mediation Marianne came to urge ; but the crying girl continued,

" Yes, yes, you can, and you must.—I only want you to contrive to see him, and tell him he will break my heart—that you know he will break my heart, if he goes away angry with me."

" Indeed—indeed, Miss Affington, you must excuse me."

" No,

“ No, no,” said Marianne, vehemently, “ you must do it, and do it directly.”

“ Will it not have a very odd appearance, coming from me?—Had you not better send to him, and speak yourself ? ”

“ No, no ; there can be no impropriety in *your* going, because you are nobody of consequence.”

“ True!—But then how can I expect him to listen to me ? ” asked Miss Lamorne, smiling at the good reason given her.

“ Oh ! he will listen to you, I am sure ; for once, when Lady Cottisbrooke was praising your manner of speaking, I heard him say, he hoped such a tongue as your’s would never be set to persuade him to do wrong.”

“ I am obliged to him for the compliment, if it be one.—But who would trust
to

to the opinion of Sir Edward ?— You know he is not always in his right senses.”

“ Oh ! but he is now, I am sure.—Now do, pray Miss Lamorne, go !—and I will give you—I will give you twenty guineas :—I do not mind money.”

“ Now,” said Peregrina, turning from her with a rejecting wave of her hand, “ you have determined me to refuse you.—What my *judgment* forbids me to do, Miss Marianne, no *bribe* shall ever tempt me to.”

“ I beg your pardon, my dearest Lamorne ! Indeed, I did not mean to offend you !—But, if you love me,” added the disconsolate lady, dropping on her knees, —“ if you would not see me die of a broken heart, do, God bless you, only go to Edward, and tell him his unhappy Marianne would rather die, than part from him in anger ! ”

“ Are

“ Are you sure,” asked Peregrina, with a suspecting look, “ that you are on terms to justify this ? ”

“ O yes,” she answered, “ upon my honor.—I dare not tell you all I could of his attachment to me ; but——”

“ You are not privately married to him : are you ? ”

“ No : he cannot marry for some months.”

“ Well,” said Peregrina, after a pause, “ I think I am wrong, and I dare say I shall have reason to repent my interference ; but I will go, rather than see you so unhappy.”

Marianne jumped up from her suppliant posture, and would have sent her mediatrix, *as a person of no consequence*, without any previous warning ; but in this

particular she begged to have her own way, and sent a servant to request to know where she might immediately speak with Sir Edward Bergholt.

He sent word, he would wait on her instantly ; and Marianne withdrew.

The moments of expectation were painful. She thought of Courtland, and she wished to think on him; and she had no great relish for the interview she had been forced to request.

Sir Edward entered the room, and seating himself on the sash-frame of the window, half in the house and half *al fresco*, he made up a countenance fit for hearing a long story.

She began with apologising for her summons.

He considered himself as honored by it.

Thus

Thus encouraged, she proceeded to relate, in the best manner she could, poor Marianne's distress.

His countenance changed frequently as she spoke; and she sometimes feared she had touched on a string which might jar on his newly regained faculties; but when she paused, he said,

“ Do not imagine, when I declare myself astonished at your application, and unmoved by it, that I mean either to blame that or to depreciate your powers. Your good nature has been imposed on; the blame rests with those who have deceived you; you have discharged a very painful office most faithfully, and for that I honor you; but I must set you right, that you may neither blame me nor yourself. Marianne Affington has been very *obliging* to me; and she has taken this method to remind me of it; there has been no quarrel between us, I assure you; nor can there ever

be any, for we are totally independent of each other. When first, on finding my health improved by the sea-air, she spread her tresses to catch my heart—a heart, God knows! worth nobody’s coveting; I frankly warned her to expect no return from me; for that my best affections were bestowed where, without even the common food of fallacious hope, they had made their eternal nest.”

There was anguish in his countenance; there was a glistening tear in his eye, as he pronounced these words, and Peregrina, when he paused, fearing that she might betray too much of sympathy, interrupted his proceeding by apologising for her error, and would have retired to seek Marianne; but he stopt her and went on :

“ I cannot bear you should think me culpable in this matter; I would not for the world be cruel; but who could have thought that the frivolous chit-chat of such
an

an unhappy mortal as myself could have been so misconstrued? There is but one woman in the world I ever loved, or ever can love : this Marianne knows."

Peregrina instantly thought on Mrs. Barnby ; but this was knowledge not to be revealed ; and he again went on, after a short pause :

" Who could have believed that either the heron-like Miss Affington, the swan-like Harriet, or the dove-like Marianne, ~~with their money, their ambition, and their~~ worldly eyes, could have cast a thought on me, with the risque of poverty before me, with a head not at all able to cope with the subtleties of the world, and a heart which hopeless love, and the most cruel deceit, and the most malignant persecution, have all rent to tatters ! !"

" Be calm, Sir Edward, for heaven's sake," interrupted Peregrina, fearing he was growing frantic.

“ You may trust me *here*,” he replied ;
“ I have nothing but misery before me.”

“ Your fancy deceives you.”

“ No, no, it does not.”

“ You cannot be in any danger of poverty.”

“ I am ; for I have secret information, that that villain, Haccombe, did not return from India the Croesus he gave himself out ^{—even living on my money} ;—that he has, by means of a will, which he pretends to be mine, and in the certainty that I cannot survive many months, raised large sums on my estates.—The blind partiality of my father, who was prejudiced against me, gave me and every part of my property into his power ; and I believe the villain has ruined me. You will not, I know, divulge this ; but who would not go mad, like me, with such treatment ?”

“ God

“ God forbid it should be so bad !” said Peregrina with her handkerchief at her eyes; “ but still your love is not, I can take on me to say, hopeless,” added she, too anxious for his ease.

“ How do you know ? Is it not ?” he asked, changing his posture in a moment.

“ No,” she replied : “ ask me no questions, but believe me your affection is duly returned.”

“ Is it ? thou angel of peace,” said he, with up-lifted hands and eyes ; but still that would make me only more wretched ; but do you understand me ? do I not deceive myself ?”

“ I do understand you ; you do not deceive yourself Mrs. Barnby :—O Lord ! I have said too much.”

“ Mrs. Barnby ?” he repeated, “ and who told you that it was Mrs. Barnby I loved ?”

“ I had *hoped* it,” she answered.

“ Why hoped it ?”

“ Because she loves you.”

“ I believe so, from my soul,” said he, jumping on his feet ; “ but however, let us talk no more on this subject. Is this all your business with me, Miss Lamorne ? had you nothing else to say ?”

She said, “ she came only to plead for Miss Marianne Affington.”

“ Then, pray, with my compliments, tell Miss Marianne Affington, she is a great fool ; and that I advise her for the future to be cautious of playing such tricks.”

He

He then bowed, passed her, and left her excessively hurt at her facility, and not a little angry at the errand she had been sent on.

Not having any natural love for scolding, she was fearful of meeting her employer, before reason had regained its dominion over her resentment; and she glided to a distant apartment, in silence, to cool by recollection; but a message following from the impatient lady, she wrote to her;

“ Fearful, Madam, that I might, if we met, forget in the mortification you have cruelly exposed me to, the respect due to your superior situation, permit me to make my pen rather than my tongue inform you of my ill success; but I fear, I hardly need, in any way, tell you, that Sir Edward disclaims equally all knowledge of the offence you assured me he had taken, and all right of being offended. You assured me, on your honor, Madam, that

my mediation was justified by the terms you were on with him : you could not but know you deceived me ; and surely you have degraded yourself.

“ Suffer me to add, Madam, and make due allowances for the indignation I feel, by considering the provocation given me, that however contemptible I may appear in your eyes, I have a spirit to resent such treatment ; and that nothing will erase it from my memory, unless you will condescend to say you are sorry for the pain you have given to

Your very humble, but not abject,
PEREGRINA LAMORNE.”

No answer was returned by Miss Marianne ; but Peregrina soon after saw the three sisters arm in arm walking in the garden, in very close conversation. She was engaged to ride on horseback with Lady Essex, to Pegwell Bay, and she hastened to dress. Hamilton accompanied them ; and the rest
of

of the family were left to amuse themselves, as had been projected, by a sail, for which the day was uncommonly favorable.

But to her great surprise, on returning home, she saw Miss Affingtons' coach preparing as if for an excursion, and their servants moving about very briskly; she followed Lady Effex into the sitting-room, with some curiosity to know what had deranged their plan, Captain Courtland quitting them to finish his preparations.

Many tongues in high tones were audible, as the door was opened. There was a formidable circle of the ladies only; and Lady Cottisbrooke sitting in a dejected posture, and with an uneasy aspect, was saying in a mild voice, and therefore the only one distinguishable, "I can only say, that I am extremely sorry any thing unpleasant has arisen in my family; and I wish all animosity forgotten: but here comes Miss

Lamorne ; she can perhaps better justify herself than I can."

" It is out of her *power* to justify herself," said Miss Harriet.

" I am sure, what I have said is very —," said Miss Marianne, cut short of her conclusion, by the sight of Peregrina.

" I do not know," said Miss Affington, " that Miss Lamorne is so much to blame ; but I think some other people have cause to blush."

" If you mean me, Madam," replied Lady Almerina, who sat in the window, with her arms crossed, and her feet extended, " you had better say no more ; for I am not obliged to bear your insolence. It was your own fault, if you were deceived ; —pretty, indeed, to suppose, because your father scraped together such vulgar fortunes
for

for you all, that every man you met was to be in love with your money! Lord Cottisbrooke does not value money; he has no need—but he would think himself very much disgraced by an attachment to a banker's daughter. Why I have heard your father lived at a sign!"

"Pray, my dear madam," said Peregrina, bending in a whisper to Lady Cottisbrooke, "what is the matter?"

"I cannot tell you," she answered; "you will hear."

Miss Affington had replied with due sharpness to Lady Almerina, with a hint or two at *poor nobility*, and concluding with an admonition to her ladyship not to provoke her too far.

Lady Almerina's answer was a defiance, and the Marquis and Lord Cottisbrooke would have been the next topics, if Miss
Harriet

Harriet had not, with much superciliousness, hoped Miss Lamorne left Captain Courtland well.

“ We have but just quitted our horses,” said Peregrina innocently ; “ I know nothing of him since.”

“ *You* take care to have two strings to *your* bow,” said Miss Marianne, addressing herself to Peregrina, and bowing from the back of her chair, against which she leaned, as she sat.

“ I do not understand you, madam.”

“ I dare say,” she replied, speaking to her sisters, “ the coach must be ready—Let us go.”

“ Not,” said Peregrina, “ till, with Lady Cottisbrooke’s leave, I request to know in what *I* have offended.”

“ In

“ In being too *unoffending*, I believe,” replied Lady Cottisbrooke in a low tone of displeasure.

“ Nay, my dear,” said Lady Almerina to her with the sauciest air possible, “ it is *I* am the principal aggressor. Miss Affington is angry with me because I would not run away with the marquis, that she might have secured Cottisbrooke to herself.”

“ No, Lady Almerina,” answered the offended fair—“ I am angry at your *duplicity*—you were laying snares for the marquis, while you were engaged to Lord Cottisbrooke.”

“ If that is all, sister,” said Harriet, “ I should not concern myself with other people’s faults ; but I think Miss Lamorne, who is so much admired for her *good sense* and *prudence*, might have had more regard for her character than to flirt with Captain Courtland, and shut herself up with Sir Edward

Edward Bergholt at once ; but I will take care, madam, to place your character in such a light, that not a gentleman in this or any other county shall ever make you an offer."

" Flirt with Captain Courtland and Sir Edward Bergholt?" repeated Peregrina in a tone of surprise. " When did I do so?"

" Come, come," said Lady Cottisbrooke, " I must take the liberty of imposing some restraint on your language, ladies. If any one has been injured, let the injury be proved or controverted fairly. With regard to Lady Almerina and Miss Affington, I must say that they have been, as young women often and very excusably are, too anxious about their attachments. If Lady Almerina was dazzled by the marquis's civilities, I cannot believe she would seriously have used my son ill; and if Miss Affington, for want of knowledge
of

of her, supposed her so capricious, Lady Almerina ought not to quarrel with what, had she not been mistaken, would have proved so convenient to her, as taking my son off her hands."

"No," interposed Harriet, "I cannot see that that was so bad; but Captain Courtland's conduct—"

"Do you mean his speaking to me this morning?" said Peregrina.

"No," answered Harriet, much to Peregrina's comfort, "I know nothing of that; but I think it is very fine to be invited here to be insulted."

"Less high language if you please, madam," said Lady Cottisbrooke.

"Yes," said the eldest miss, "Harriet can be as violent as any body when she herself

herself is affronted; but every body else must put up with all sorts of affronts."

"*You have no cause to be so great, sister,*" answered the second miss, "*for what Lady Almerina says is very true—she is very right; for you know you told me yourself, and our servant heard you, that you could easily cajole—yes, that was your expression—you could easily cajole Lady Almerina into a passion for the marquis, and then Lord Cottisbrooke was your own—and you were trying how well Affington, Earl of Cottisbrooke, would sound for your eldest son's style, when his father was dead.*"

Lady Cottisbrooke said this was really insufferable, to quarrel with her family, and between themselves too; but they would not desist.

Miss Affington reproached Harriet with having said, she wished Courtland might
fall

fall in the next service he was sent on, as she then would try for Edward Bergholt.

This called up Marianne, who, defeated and detected as she had been, could not forbear coloring with rage at this new information; and now interrogated Harriet as to the truth of what she had heard.

“ There,” said Lady Almerina, “ see how warmly Marianne takes it up. I thought what all her languishing and watching Edward meant.”

“ *My languishing?* madam,” retorted Marianne. “ If I *watched Edward*, as you call him, it was to see how he escaped the arts of some other people.”

“ Say whom you mean, dear Marianne,” said Lady Cottisbrooke; “ it is illiberal to use such language.”

“ Why, I mean, Lady Cottisbrooke—”
said

said she in such a fury, that she could get no farther.

“ *Me?*” repeated her ladyship laughing.

“ No, not *you*, but your mean, artful dependent, Miss Lamorne, who has most artfully and most basely been representing me to Sir Edward as—as—as—”

“ As what, my dear?” said Lady Cottisbrooke.

“ Why she told Sir Edward I was in love with him.”

“ Then I fancy,” said Lady Cottisbrooke, with an arch smile, “ she said no more than is too true ; and I should have thought, from what I had observed, that you would have thanked her.”

“ What have you observed, madam ?”
was uttered by the four ladies militant,
but

but with very different emphasis and meaning.

“ Miss Lamorne is going to speak,” said Lady Cottisbrooke; “ hear her first, and I will tell you.”

“ I forbear,” said Peregrina, “ to justify myself, because it would be taking a cruel advantage of a weakness, perhaps it is only my humble station exempts me from. But unless Miss Marianne Affington recalls her injurious expressions towards me, I shall beg that Sir Edward may be appealed to.”

“ And Hamilton, too,” said Lady Almerina, who had no pleasure equal to that of stirring up the storm.

“ No, no,” said Lady Cottisbrooke, “ do not make the men witnesses of this silly business.”

“ Then

“ Then I insist,” said Peregrina warmly, “ on Miss Marianne’s producing the note I wrote to her just before I went out, or on her acquitting me.”

“ I—I—I—” said Marianne, searching her pockets—“ the note?—O, I destroyed it.”

“ Then permit me, madam,” said Peregrina, “ to shew Lady Cottisbrooke, for I would not degrade you too far, the rough copy of it, which I kept for my own justification.”

She gave the paper to her friend, who read it aloud. No one could doubt its import—Harriet led the way in contemptuous language; the rest followed, and Lady Cottisbrooke then said, that judging all by her own observation, she thought the whole party of disputants, especially the three sisters, ought to extend mutual forgiveness towards each other on the plea
of

of general error. She had already recommended to Lady Almerina and Miss Affington lenity towards each other's failings. She wished Miss Harriet to believe what she could aver to be the truth, that Courtland's sentiments for her were unchanged, and that if she had not experienced from him, while at Margate, those attentions she had a claim to, it was solely to be attributed to her own conduct, which had been unequivocally discouraging. Marianne she gently admonished to be more on her guard in divulging her sentiments ; but in a manner as firm as her thorough good breeding would permit, she warned all the party against revenging their own mistakes of conduct by any reflections on Miss Larmorne, whom her ladyship declared she should never scruple to defend to the utmost extent of truth and justice.

A servant just then opened the door, to say the carriage was driving up : the rich ladies rose, but Lady Almerina would not ;
they

they stiffly thanked Lady Cottisbrooke for her civilities—she expressed her regret at their hasty departure, and advised them to change their mind; they hesitated, and looked at each other---the two eldest seemed propitious; but Marianne, with confusion in her countenance, urged them to be gone, and they again moved. Lady Cottisbrooke begged them only to wait till the gentlemen were informed they were going; but they declining even this acquiescence, she promised Harriet that Hamilton would see her immediately on his reaching town, enquired how long they should remain there before they went to Cheltenham, and wishing them a pleasant journey, allowed them to depart. They could not bow their spirits or their knees to take notice of Peregrina; and they unfortunately lost, by being out of hearing, the impromptu of Lady Almerina's wit, who bade adieu to *the Miss Moneybags*.

Thus ended one of those unpleasant
staying-

staying-bouts, by which those, who have it in their power to amuse, are compelled periodically to purchase temporary quiet.—Lady Cottisbrooke, till now, had had no opportunity of judging of the real temper of the Affingtons;—for in the whirl of London all asperities are lost;—and it was chiefly for the purpose of better acquaintance, that she had given them the invitation. The young heiresses, like magpies in a field, were seldom seen separated: this had given her a favorable impression of their *harmony*; but when she saw that each was a spy on the others, and witnessed their petty strifes and emulations, she could not give so flattering a construction to that which originated only in a fear of being neglected or outwitted.

She therefore, though hurt at the manner in which they had quitted her house, and somewhat anxious on her dear Hamilton's account, saw them depart without regret, while poor Peregrina felt most deeply

their unkindness towards her, and was earnest to acquit herself to Lady Cottisbrooke; but both she and Lady Almerina, who in her hatred to the Assingtons forgot for a moment that she bore Miss Lamorne, quieted her tears by the most satisfactory acquittal.

Captain Courtland and Sir Edward were to set out at day-break the next morning. The family dined together: Lady Almerina was *really civil* to Lord Cottisbrooke; Sir Edward was uncommonly gloomy; and Hamilton joined his brother and Lady Almerina, more warmly than his mother wished, in ridicule and censure of the Assingtons. It was in vain that she palliated their faults: justice was against them; and self-interest was a stranger to the breast of Courtland.

A walk was proposed in the evening — Lady Cottisbrooke had letters to write; and Sir Edward declined the party. Find-
ing

ing the wind unpleasant on the pier, they strolled towards St. Peter's ; and Lady Essex having in her way picked up her usual dancing-partner, and Lady Almerina thinking it perhaps prudent to take care of the earl, Hamilton and Peregrina were of course thrown together, not much to the dissatisfaction of either.

Confirmed, by the event of the morning, in her idea respecting Ami Bonange, when Courtland again expressed his regret that he must quit England, she replied, " But you will still write to me ? "

He paused for a moment, and then answered, " Undoubtedly, if I have your permission."

" That you cannot question," said she, smiling.—" But how am I to direct to you ? "

" I will give you the agent's address, and he will forward your letters."

“ But by what name shall I direct ? ”

“ O ! by my own,” he answered.—
“ There can be no danger : you can contrive to put your letters in at Hall’s yourself, in your walks ; and I will take care nobody shall know my hand.”

This point being settled, to avoid observation she joined Lady Effex.

At the next opportunity he begged, as the greatest favor she could confer, to know with what sentiments he left her.

“ You ought to know me, by this time, too well, to ask,” she answered.—“ Believe me, you have all my esteem, my friendship, and my gratitude :—and ——

“ More I do not ask,” he replied, interrupting her —“ Preserve such sentiments for me till I return.”

A reverted look from Lady Almerina made him cautious. They spoke no more on this subject. Adieus passed after supper; and, on the part of the mother and sister, were most afflicting.—The next morning the two gentlemen departed, and Peregrina felt, though she was forced to conceal it, that Ami Bonange had a deep interest in her broken rest, and low spirits when she arose.

Three days passed in peace, rendered doubly valuable by the late domestic storm. Lady Cottisbrooke, indeed, felt too deeply for her youngest son's situation, to be happy; but Lady Essex seemed to have forgotten how recently he had departed; and Lady Almerina, in her assiduity towards her lover, had buried her recollections and resentments. Peregrina, more than ever, wished for a letter from Ami Bonange; and she was at this time gratified. The same style of admonition, and not all of it intelligible, was continued. She was told, that

the uncommon merit of her conduct had still farther increased the friendship she so profited by ; but the letter contained not the smallest allusion to the recent separation. This she attributed to proper caution ; and she determined to proceed on the same plan.

One of the least perspicuous passages was this :—“ *Danger awaits you ; but fear not : I shall be on the watch.--You are beloved by many, more particularly by two ; still more laudably by one.—One of two will bring you into jeopardy ; the other may distress you.—I can see no farther at present.*”

Courtland had left with her his agent's address, but had dispensed with her making use of it till he could give her some intelligence as to the destination of his regiment : she therefore had it not in her power to beg any light on this mystery.

CHAP. XVI.

It was now the second week in August ; and Peregrina, when she accompanied Lady Essex to the sea, on her bathing mornings, had lately seen at Surflen's an elderly lady, whose face was new to her, but whose appearance was above the common rank, and whose manners were remarkably prepossessing. While waiting for Lady Essex's return, Peregrina often sat down to the piano-forte in the room, and this lady frequently chatted with her on the topic of music, on the beauty of the sea-view, and the general landscape of the island.

This lady too waited for a friend, whom Peregrina felt an idle wish to see. She was soon gratified : the bathing lady one morning appeared, and Peregrina was as much

pleased with her as with her former acquaintance. She seemed in ill health, was very much fatigued, and sat in the room without appearing to notice any one but her friend. Her person was emaciated: her features retained vestiges of beauty, which it was evident sickness, rather than years, had impaired: there was an interesting melancholy about her; and Peregrina felt sorry, when she saw the two ladies drive off in a very handsome but unemblazoned post-chaise.

She enquired who these ladies were, and learnt that the name of the elder was *Halnaby*, and of the younger *Birron*. They were supposed to be mother and daughter, and were said to be widows: they lived in *Hawley-square*, but were never in public.

Again and again Peregrina saw these interesting ladies; and it was soon evident that the elder had mentioned her favorably to the younger, who, mending a little in
her

her health, took notice of her with the most encouraging affability. They now met at church in the miscellaneous groupe of the chancel, and occasionally in their walks; and Peregrina's head was so full of Mrs. Halnaby and Mrs. *Birron*, that Lady Cottisbrooke became curious to see them; and introducing herself, they soon grew sociable, and came to visiting terms.

The pleasure Peregrina promised herself, and derived from this new connexion, was superior to any she had felt from transient friendships; but her attention was soon called off to another object. She received a letter in an unknown hand, signed *Amis Bonange*; and, with inexpressible distress, she learnt from it that her faithful monitor was so ill as to be unable to write with his own hand; that he apprehended his life to be in imminent danger, and begged earnestly to see her at the Fountain at Canterbury, if she could get there without alarming the family.

It was almost impossible for her to recollect what she ought to do. If Courtland was in such danger, surely his mother should have been informed of it.—Why was he still at Canterbury?—How could he expect her to come to him?—She was distracted with her doubts and fears, but very unwilling to neglect his request, or to betray the important secret. She determined, at length, that it was impossible for her to comply, and that she would trust to Lady Cottisbrooke's hearing this disagreeable news, by some other channel.

She could not, however, be easy : she thought, with the sincerest grief, of losing Ami Bonange ; and she thought herself ungrateful in omitting the only mark of gratitude it was in her power to bestow : but no possibility of getting to Canterbury appeared till the evening, when Mrs. Halnaby and Mrs. *Birron* joined Lady Cottisbrooke on the pier, and accidentally asked Miss Lamorne if she would the next morning
 favor

favor them with her company to Canterbury, whither they were going on business. She gladly accepted the offer, sanctioned by Lady Cottisbrooke's approbation, and the hour was fixed.

She was not without scruples as to the propriety of her acquiescence, but she hoped she could easily reconcile her prudence to the necessity, as the ladies had themselves said they should put up their carriage, and take a short dinner, at the very inn she was directed to.

Ah! Peregrina, child of misfortune! sport of chance! but ever favorite of the worthy! deserted by thy natural protectors, fostered by strangers! how near art thou now to the discovery of thy affectionate parent, and to a situation that will abundantly repay thee for all thy troubles?---Without doubt, the elder lady will not always persist in calling the younger *Joanna*:---thou wilt catch the name of *Byram*, not

Birron, as ignorant tongues have taught thee :---thou wilt learn thy story, and sink in rapture on the bosom of thy faint-like mother.

The anxiety of her mind, respecting Courtland, kept *Peregrina* waking till after sun-rise, when dropping into a slumber, she dreamt of all things horrible, woke in a fright, and rose in perturbation.

The time appointed for her setting out was not till after the arrival of the post; and by it she had another letter from *Ami Bonange*, directed, to her infinite consolation, by his own hand. With her usual circumspection, she retired to read it; and it contained the following valuable intelligence, dated from Canterbury :

“ It is my earnest prayer that this may not come too late:---I am almost tempted to be my own ambassador. Be cautious, *Peregrina* ! On no account come towards
this

this city for some days ; or, if you do, let it be in company you can trust.

“ I have discovered a most infernal scheme, in which C—— is the principal agent. His servant, who is his jackall, has been fool enough to confide his master’s secrets.—His visit to his mother was made with no other view than to get access to you. The direction of your letters to me has been remarked :—my signature has been used to entrap you ; and you are to be prevailed on, under pretence of my dangerous illness, to be at the Fountain in this city to-day.

“ Come not ! Stir not, I beseech you ! —But lest you should, in the great humanity I know you to possess, have set out on this charitable expedition, I will beat the road all the morning, to meet, to warn, to save you.

“ I need

“ I need not tell you what C———’s views are His character is well known. His conduct will soon shew you, that, tho’ he is not at all tainted with vice, he has no affection for thank— I do not say, Trust no one ; ’tis a humanitarian caution ; but rely on him, who is for ever

Your most faithful

AMI BONANGE.”

What was now to be done was not difficult to decide. Peregrina excused herself to her friends on the plea of indisposition ; and her countenance bore the same tidings to Lady Cottisbrooke, who approved her declining the jaunt.—But against whom was she to guard ? The initial which Ami Bonange had used as a designation, was none ; for it might mean Lord Cottisbrooke or Captain Courtland. His lordship she ever thought ill of ; but it was painful to her to admit a degrading thought of his brother.—Yet, had he not deceived her ?
Had

Had he not passed on her for Ami Bonange?
 ---It must be Courtland she was to guard
 against.

Under pretence of her illness, she staid within, and confined herself above stairs almost all day. The ladies only were at home; and good-natured Lady Essex persisted in sharing her solitude; and though it was little in her power to amuse, she was useful in sometimes diverting Peregrina's thoughts.

At the supper-hour, they went down together. The earl only was in the parlor, and seemed newly arrived, and in deep thought. He abruptly asked his sister, if any letters had come by the morning's post. She not being able to tell him, Peregrina embraced the opportunity, and said, "It brought one for me, my lord."---"O! yes, I remember," said Lady Essex, "my mother said she feared it brought you bad news."---"It was indeed bad news," said
 Pere-

Peregrina; “the worst in the world. It told me I had a secret enemy!”

“But,” said Lord Cottisbrooke, “perhaps it told you how to guard against that enemy.”---His assumed *sang froid* could not entirely deceive her. She shot at random; when she answered, “Yes, my lord, and how to expose that enemy; which I shall not fail to do.”

She thought he changed countenance:---Lady Cottisbrooke and Lady Almerina came in from a moon-light stroll on the cliff; and they sat down to supper, from which Miss Lamorne soon retired.

The first news she heard the next morning was, that the earl had given up his intention of remaining in England, and meant to rejoin his tutor, who had waited for him till the last moment.---He had set off for London before the family met for breakfast; and thus Peregrina was at once confirmed

confirmed in her surmise, and released from her danger. Lady Cottisbrooke regretted, Lady Almerina lamented, his sudden whim; but Peregrina could not join either.

She wrote immediately, in those terms her sense of gratitude prompted, to Ami Bonange. Her curiosity strongly urged her to enquire of him, what had incited Lord Cottisbrooke to take so much trouble for the paltry purpose of access to her; but the respect she entertained for her friend, in his mysterious character, restrained her.

CHAP. XVII.

BUT there was another circumstance, not much connected with her narrow escape from the earl, that claimed her attention, and gave her considerable uneasiness. She doubted again, whether she were correct in her guess respecting *her good genius*; and the next morning relieved her, but in the most distressing way, from this suspense; for it brought her a letter, directed in a hand that could not be suspected, but which the contents and signature proved to be from Courtland. He dated from London, and wrote as follows :

“ I AM, I believe, the worst scribe in the world ; nor can I even boast the ability to tell my own story in my own way.--- Where I feel most, I can say the least ; and
when

when my heart is at the fullest, it is the least given to overflow. Suffer me, therefore, my dearest madam, to be incoherent and unintelligible; for, were I to seek for language, I perhaps should not only puzzle you, but myself.

“ My acquaintance with you is not, I confess, of a standing that gives me any claim to your regard; but, as I have not talents for deceit, I trust you will give me credit, when I assure you that, however awkwardly I may appear on paper, it will be my *misfortune* if I offend you.

“ You have ever, my dear madam, behaved towards me in a way that demonstrated your intrinsic excellence. I had the happiness to be appointed, by some unknown friend, to the guardianship of you, on an interesting occasion; and, though I could plead no active interposition for you, you have generously treated me as one you could rely on. My small services are
abundantly

abundantly overpaid by this inestimable gratification. Do not therefore imagine that I mean covertly to claim, what it is my business to supplicate.

“ You have seen the woman destined, by my mother’s anxiety for my success in the world, and the scantiness of my paternal inheritance, to be my wife. It cannot surprise you, if I confess myself utterly unattached to her: I *was* only *indifferent*: I am *now* decidedly *averse*; and I think my mother is almost as much disgusted with the specimens she has had of her disposition, as I am, and every body must be, who has ever lived under the same roof with her.

“ I am aware of the difficulties of my situation: I know well, that I have to cut my way through the world; but provided for, as I am, by an honorable profession, I do not shrink from the duty of a man; nor will I ever, against the dictates of my heart
and

and its purest affections, sell myself to domestic misery. After this declaration, I need not add, that from this moment I disclaim all intention of marrying Harriet Assington.

“ It would be unpardonable presumption to say I have formed any other intention : I mean only to submit my wishes to your judgment, and to tell you, in the most respectful manner I am capable, that my whole happiness depends on you ; and though I have, I confess, very little to invite you to, I can shield you from want when I die ; and, while I live, it shall be my sole study to render you happy.

“ Can you then, my dearest madam, relinquish the more flattering prospects that court your eye ? Can you be deaf to the solicitations of the many, who I know seriously admire you, to become a poor soldier’s wife ?—The expression looks presumptuous : I could almost erase it ; but
it

it speaks the untaught language of my heart.—It is my meaning, however it might be recommended by more circuitous phrase.

“ In admiration of you on my first acquaintance, I wrote to my brother, concerning you, in a style that made my disinterestedness suspected: he has not only never discouraged my views, but he has frequently blamed me for my inactivity.

“ I rely, not only on my mother’s affection for me, but on her good sense, that she will immediately see the propriety, and, I may add, *advantage* of her acquiescence. I am confident of her regard for you; and from some hints she has lately dropt, I have good reason to believe that, though she might think a feigned opposition necessary to acquit her to Harriet, whom, on my honor, I am no way engaged to, she would ultimately be delighted with claiming you as her daughter. I intreat you not to let scruples on this point ruin my hopes.

“ Our

“ Our embarkation is deferred for two or three weeks. I write by this post to my mother, but not on this subject. Unless you are irreconcilably offended at this address, I shall live in the hope of your fulfilling your promise, by writing to me.— At present, I can give no other address than to George’s coffee-house, Haymarket; but you may depend on it, that whatever you may write will safely meet, and confer a lasting obligation on, madam,

Your most devoted humble servant,
HAMILTON COURTLAND.”

Respectful as was the style of this letter, and flattering as was the prospect it offered her, Peregrina could not rest easy under the errors its contents were founded on. She saw that an accidental combination of circumstances had deceived her; and she feared that, as Courtland was ignorant of her mistake, he must, however his delicacy might suppress it, think contemptuously of her for her facility. She thought with pain

of the idea his brother must conceive of her, if, in their confidential correspondence, he learnt what had been her conduct; and that it should be a secret from him, she could not hope, since she could not doubt that it was Courtland's want of reserve that had procured her the honor of his lordship's attention. Regarding, therefore, the business on which he had written as only a secondary consideration, she answered his letter by a brief acknowledgment of his condescension; assured him that, whatever encouragement he had discovered in her deportment, was the consequence of a mistake; and that, though she should never forget her many obligations to him, or think of him but with esteem, she must beg he would be for ever silent on the subject of his letter.

Her spirits were hurt by this awkward affair, of which she immediately wrote a detail to Ami Bonange, begging his sanction for the ease of her conscience. A return,

turn, earlier than the post, gratified and surprised her. A special messenger, who could answer no question, brought it from one of the hotels. It came while the family were sitting at supper, and Peregrina saw Lady Cottisbrooke look a little doubtfully, and Lady Almerina penetratingly, at her, as she put it unopened into her pocket. The matter seemed, however, to make no farther impression. The letter contained expressions of enthusiastic approbation.—She and Lady Essex met Mrs. *Birron* in the morning; they had an agreeable walk together; and Peregrina almost forgot how she had been distressed.

Lady Cottisbrooke was from home the greater part of the next day. Sir Edward Bergholt, who had returned to his boarding-house, and seemed again relapsing into oddity, called early in the forenoon; and immediately as he was gone, Lady Almerina appeared all business and agitation. Having a maid-servant purposely to wait on

VOL. III. I. her,

her, it was seldom her custom to combat her habit of indolence by activity: she would ring for a servant to pick up a book, if she dropped it, or to take off her clogs: she never performed any other part in her dressing, than that of being still; but this day she was uncommonly brisk: she seemed ransacking her drawers, and putting all things either into great order or confusion. Her temper was so affected by her business, that it was dangerous to have occasion to speak to her; and, as mistress of the house in Lady Cottisbrooke's absence, she was without bounds a tyrant.

It entered Peregrina's imagination, tho' she had scarcely ground for the conjecture, that an elopement was in agitation; but who was to be the partner of her ladyship's flight was not easy to divine, except it were Sir Edward; and against this, unless he was indeed very crazy, or the parties were more than ordinarily subtle, every thing she recollected militated: but Peregrina
had

had seen craft till she had learnt to be suspicious.

What passed in her mind, she kept profoundly a secret. She spent the evening with Lady Effex at Mrs. Halnaby's, whither Lady Almerina did not chuse to accompany them ; and at her return was more grieved than surprised, to find Lady Cottisbrooke in excessive perturbation, writing letters, and dispatching servants in quest of Lady Almerina, who had walked out in the evening with her maid, and was not now to be found.

The enquiries made in the town, and Peregrina's previous observations, quieted Lady Cottisbrooke's fears that some accident might have befallen the young lady ; and the information of one of the lower servants soon gave some light into the mystery, and cleared Sir Edward in Peregrina's opinion : for it was now unquestionable that Lady Almerina had, even at the time

when she appeared most attached to Lord Cottisbrooke, maintained a clandestine correspondence with her slender friend the marquis.

Lady Cottisbrooke had, it must be confessed, more than a mother's share of maternal anxiety; and Peregrina, who loved her little less than if she had been her parent, was extremely hurt at this new and very serious vexation: but she soon perceived that her ladyship was not inclined to view it on its most gloomy side, and that though, out of a principle of charity, she forbore invective against the fugitive, it was a climax of her character that did not at all astonish her. She appeared more dejected by the consequent reflection this accident suggested on the little comfort she derived from her children: her eldest son, she observed, was now again unsettled, and she feared he might suffer by this early disappointment: she lamented the necessity of her younger son's exposing himself, perhaps
through

through life, to its greatest dangers, to compensate for his small provision; but there seemed some latent anxiety, respecting him, that affected her still more: she bewailed Lady Essex's *ill health*; for of her intellectual infirmities she never spoke; and addressing herself affectionately to Peregrina, she said, "You must, my dear, reconcile me to these afflictions, by supposing yourself one of my children, and by administering to me that comfort which it is not in their power to bestow.—You see how Lady Almerina has rewarded me; but I know you are not like her."

An address so melancholy, and expressions of affection so cordial, Peregrina could answer only by tears,—tears which flowed so abundantly for the sorrows of this exemplary parent, that they prevented her noticing a letter, which one of the upper servants brought in and delivered to his lady, as found by one of the house-maids on Lady Almerina's dressing table.

Lady Cottisbrooke glanced over the contents in silence, and then, with a significant smile, shewed the paper to Miss Lamorne. It was not an apology for, or a justification of, her own conduct ; but it was a general invective against the family she had quitted, and Miss Lamorne in particular, who was said to have laid traps for both Lady Cottisbrooke's sons, and whose art was represented as unfathomably dangerous ; and it concluded with a *modest* hope that when the writer should be, as a few hours must render her, *allied to the blood-royal*, even Miss Lamorne would treat, with rather more respect, than she had hitherto done, her ladyship's most humble, most obedient, &c. &c.

The excess of this accusation wholly defeated its malignity ; for Lady Cottisbrooke set it all down to the account of malice, and, only smiling at the vain attempt to ruin innocence, she turned her thoughts to the

the duties she had to discharge towards her adult ward; and having already done all in her power to discover where she was, she now wrote to the only relation the young lady had, an aunt, who lived obscurely and on a small income,—for which good reasons she was most devoutly hated by her niece. Her ladyship next wrote to Lord Cottisbrooke, to tell him of his loss,—and to Captain Courtland, as entitled to this attention from her,—and then seemed perfectly easy about Lady Almerina Delaford.

But the next morning brought Courtland himself, whose loco-motive propensities always saved him the trouble of apologising for a sudden intrusion. He seemed diverted at Lady Almerina's elopement;—but to laugh, was not the purpose for which he returned: he came, the first moment he could steal from London, to urge the purport of his letter to Miss Lamorne; and he embraced the first opportunity of adding to

his written energy all the force that a tongue, which could not frame itself to a falsity, and language that love made eloquent, could give it; and Peregrina had no way to stop his vehemence, but by requesting a truce for that day and the next.

CHAP. XVIII.

IN the evening, when rather a large party of Lady Cottisbrooke's acquaintance were with her, some engaged in cards, others in conversation, the rattle of a carriage was heard; a clergyman alighted at the door from a postchaise, and handed out a lady who was instantly recognised as Lady Almerina. "I will not see her," said Lady Cottisbrooke; "I am too angry to trust myself." The servants had then orders to shew Lady Almerina into the breakfast parlor; and a message came from her escort, requesting to speak with Lady Cottisbrooke. She went into another room with him, taking Miss Lamorne with her, and learnt from the stranger that he was chaplain to the Marquis's father, that he had, in company with the Duke, been for-

fortunate enough to overtake the young couple before they reached London ; that the Marquis had given up the lady without reluctance ; and it was hoped would now fulfil the more honorable engagement he had, he was convinced, been *persuaded* to break. He had the satisfaction of restoring the young lady safe, and was Lady Cottisbrooke's most obedient.

Lady Almerina wrote a note to Lady Cottisbrooke, begging to see her. It was answered only by these words : “ Not unless you can prevail on Miss Lamorne to intercede for you.” This was a condition too revolting to be easily acceded to ; and Peregrina herself begged it might be dispensed with, but Lady Cottisbrooke was determined thus to avenge her ; and when Lady Almerina saw her supper sent to her in the breakfast parlor, and found solitary confinement was to be her punishment, she so far condescended, as to request an audience of Miss Lamorne, who, far more
 moved

moved than the culprit, attended her with quivering lips and glistening eyes.

With no strength of argument, but with abundance of reiteration, she begged Peregrina to intercede with Lady Cottisbrooke, not only to admit her again to her favor, but, which still more astonished Peregrina, to conceal from Lord Cottisbrooke the folly she had been guilty of. Peregrina promised to report all she had said; but abhorring deceit, she could not give her any hope that Lord Cottisbrooke would not be informed of what had happened, as his mother had already written to him. This was a stroke of precipitation the young lady seemed not prepared for; and her tears flowed abundantly. Peregrina gave her what consolation she could, in assuring her that her future conduct might restore her to favor. She prevailed on Lady Cottisbrooke to see her before she went to her rest, and then retired to her own, more disposed to meditate on the merit of Hamilton Court-

land, than on the foibles of Lady Almerina.

It was not so easy, as it at first appeared, to decide on the part she had to pursue. She had every reason to believe Lady Cotisbrooke well disposed towards her; and it was not impossible, that, indulgent as she was to her young people, she might in some cases overlook a want of money. Of Hamilton's regard, she could not doubt: his integrity had every internal evidence; and to his merit and recommendations her own opinion bore witness. She could not plead love enough to excuse an error of judgment; but she was far from being indifferent to his welfare and happiness, and having for some time, however erroneously, fancied him her peculiar friend, she had acquired a degree of attachment to him, that a little encouragement from circumstances might soon have animated into love. She was convinced that the possession of great wealth could not only never render him

him happy, but would never save him from a broken heart, should he be unfortunate in his marriage.

Having revolved in her mind these considerations, she saw there was nothing which obliged her to dismiss Captain Courtland's proposal indignantly; but a little farther meditation convinced her that it was not to be accepted without caution. It was just probable, that Lady Cottisbrooke might, to gratify her son, give up her requisition of riches with his wife;—it was much more probable, that he had flattered himself into this idea; and if she did dispense with wealth, it might be for the advantage of connection. Alas! what advantage could a connection with Peregrina Lamorne offer to any one?

Still, let Lady Cottisbrooke be ever so propitious, was it a moral action, by a precipitate engagement, to prevent Courtland's reaping those benefits which improved acquaintance

quaintance with the world, and the passing of a few years, might offer to him? She knew herself, even when boasting the best of her descent, to be an unrecognised branch of a family : this, surely was not an eligible match for Courtland : his mother never could approve her, unless she deceived her. After much thought, therefore, she determined to make Lady Cottisbrooke acquainted with her son's partiality ; and if she found she did not quite disapprove it, to tell her that there was a mystery belonging to her which she dared not reveal.

It was Lady Cottisbrooke's practice to walk alone on the cliff opposite her house every morning, as soon as she was out of her chamber ; and Peregrina having, from her window, seen her betake herself thither, followed her, and respectfully begged she might be allowed to partake her walk.

“ Certainly, my love, but you will find me very dull company. That untoward young woman,

woman, Lady Almerina, has kept me waking all night—I scarcely know what I had best do with her.”

“ She seems so penitent for her fault, madam, that I hope she will now think seriously, and improve by it.”

“ She is penitent, I have no doubt, for her *failure*; but as for true virtuous repentance, she has, I am confident, none of it in her nature. No, my dear, I have long watched her; and if it were only for her conduct towards you, I should be hopeless of her. What could be more malicious than the letter she left?”

“ True, madam, it indicated no good will to me, but I must in part acquit her ladyship; for strange as it may appear, it is my business, in seeking you this morning in private, to confess to you that there is more reason—there is some slight ground—there is just a—”

“ My

“ My dear, why do you hesitate ?” said Lady Cottisbrooke, stopping—“ You, I am confident, can have nothing to blush for.”

“ No, indeed,” she answered ; “ I believe—I hope—nay, I may call Heaven to witness the innocence of my intentions, though I have been unfortunate.”

“ How *unfortunate* ?” asked her ladyship eagerly.

Peregrina then, with the utmost caution, and in a way that did not at all declare to what lengths her youngest son had gone, told her she could no longer, in honor, conceal from her her apprehension, which perhaps might have no deeper foundation than in her vanity and presumption, that Captain Courtland’s generous friendship for her might weaken his more justifiable attachments.

“ I am

“ I am not surpris'd at this,” said her ladyship drily.

“ But you *must* be offended at it, madam; and it is on that persuasion that I come to intreat you to do with me whatever will most conduce to your peace of mind.”

“ You are a generous girl indeed; but why *must* I be offended?”

“ Because I am poor and obscure.”

“ That may be a reason why I cannot *approve you as a daughter*, but surely it can be none why I should be *angry with you*.—*You*, poor thing! are not to blame for being captivating; as little am I inclined to rail at you for being elegant and honest; the circumstance I am the most likely to quarrel at is, that Hamilton cannot afford to marry a wife without a fortune, and I have not a fortune to give him; for at my death

death Cottisbrooke has my jointure, and Ham has very little more, I assure you, than his bare pay, which he could not live on."

" But are you then, madam, not offended with me ?"

" Not at all, my dear. If I had not been satisfied I might trust you, I should not have been as easy as I have been; but I thought well of you the first moment I saw you, and my opinion has ever since that time been improving. I saw you the other night receive a letter; and the confusion of your countenance made me suspect it was from Hamilton; but I knew Peregrina Lamorne could have no disguises with *me*; and I was certain I should hear of it."

" That letter, on my honor, was not from Captain Courtland. It was from a friend I never saw, but of whose disinterested

rested attachment I have the highest proofs, though I own I am not at liberty to reveal them."

" You have my highest confidence, my dear; but with respect to my son, tell me, has he not declared himself?"

" He has."

" And what answer did you give him?"

" I requested him for ever to be silent on the subject; and I have since represented to him the madness of his wish; but he urged me so violently, that I was forced to request till night to consider on it."

" Well! but then you must next tell me how you stand affected towards him?"

" I can never be indifferent to any one of a family who have treated me with so
much

much humanity—besides, Captain Courtland has conferred particular obligations on me, which I think I should very ill requite, and as ungratefully should I repay your ladyship's kindneſſes, were I to place him in a ſituation that muſt embarraſs him, perhaps for life."

" You are a very good girl, and a very prudent girl. It would certainly be very hazardous for him to engage himſelf; for though, while I live, I could find his family a comfortable home, that is far from a certainty. I wiſhed him to marry Harriet Affington, becauſe her large fortune would have ſet him out in the world comfortably and reſpectably; but really while ſhe was here ſhe behaved ſo oddly, that I cannot blame his indifference to her. It would, I confeſs, diſtreſs me extremely to ſee him in difficulties I could not relieve; but I would rather break my heart than oppoſe him. I wiſh ſomebody would give thee ten thouſand pounds, my Peregrina;
for

for I am afraid, without it, whatever Courtland may talk of the power of love, you will find yourselves very much straitened on all sides; but I beg in your decision you will put me out of the question. I have told you how little I can contribute to your comfort, and you know my sentiments. If you choose to come together, I will do my utmost for you; for I have now no wish but for my children's happiness. I could do, perhaps, without some of the conveniencies I enjoy; and readily would I part with them for a gratification so far superior: only think of yourselves when I am gone. Do not imagine, my love, that in thus candidly telling you my opinion, I mean any flight to you---I value you most highly—as for pedigree, I care not for it—as for money, I only wish we could do without it, or that I had it for you.”

Lady Effex now joining them, the conversation ended, and left Peregrina's heart
over-

overflowing with love and gratitude towards Lady Cottisbrooke.

But her ladyship's candor and kindness had, on the mind of her dependent, an effect far more forcible than the most vehement prohibition. In the simplicity of her heart, she weighed no contingencies, she calculated no chances : she judged only from what she saw ; and she determined that, however eligible and honorable the connexion might be to her, it must be disadvantageous to those she was most indebted to, and therefore was to be rejected by any person making the smallest claim to gratitude or moral rectitude.

In this disposition of mind (and who shall say, not somewhat doubting her own steadiness, when a flattering prospect was offered of at least casting her cares on another, to remain content in the cheerless wild of dependence?) she resolved, without waiting

the expiration of her truce, to inform Captain Courtland of his fate.

She went down to the sea with Lady Effex. Mrs. *Birron* was there without her friend, and, though nearly ready to depart, proposed waiting Lady Effex's return, that they might walk together.

Peregrina's spirits were not, this morning, equal to her usual amusement: she attempted to touch the piano forte, but it was all discord. Mrs. *Birron* seemed to grow interested in her looks; and she was forced to assume cheerfulness, lest she might excite curiosity. But whether Mrs. *Birron* was much accustomed to read the index of the mind, or only kindly commiserating, Peregrina was unable to judge; but her language and her attentions shewed she had penetration.

She this morning so far unbosomed herself as to say, she, by experience, knew
how

how far all bodily suffering was surpassed by the world's vexations; and catching Peregrina's hand, when Lady Essex was at a distance playing with her dog, she said, " Ah, Miss Lamorne ! I have a daughter to whom I looked for the reward of a stormy life. She fails my hopes: she adds to my afflictions.—Were she like you!—I could almost wish I had never seen you; for I shall go home more discontented than ever. The elegant folly I see here, excites in me no sentiment of humiliation for my daughter.—I could bear with her external defects.—But you seem the creature framed to my wishes,—and I am wicked enough to ask, Why were *you* not my daughter ? ”

Peregrina, fearing to increase both her own and her friend's dejection, endeavored to think lightly of her words; but they made an indelible impression on her mind, and she felt that she was connected with society by one more link—that of friendship

ship and affection for this excellent, interesting woman.

She met Courtland as she went into the house, and begged to speak to him at his first leisure. He had no procrastination about him at any time ; and now he could brook no delay. With artificial firmness, she told him the result of her meditations, and forcibly represented the embarrassment her acquiescence in his views must produce. He heard her impatiently, and shut his ears against conviction : he talked, lover-like, of the omnipotence of love against all evils : he quoted an instance or two, where indiscretion had been successful : he tried to extort from her a promise of waiting better days ; but this, as perhaps it might prevent the advancement of his fortune in the interim, she declined, believing that without a promise, if he were steady and events propitious, it would remain in his power to claim her : he vowed eternal constancy : she declined accepting his vows ; and hav-

ing made this sacrifice to her integrity, she retired to mourn her hard fate in secret.

Lady Cottisbrooke soon sought her, not supposing she had uttered her decision ; and her business was not to increase, but to smooth difficulties. Peregrina told her all that had past, and concealed, as far as was in her power, the share her heart had in it ; but it was not to be wholly concealed ; and nothing prevented her noble friend's giving way to it, but the disinterested fear that this beloved, this estimable girl might, in the fortune of war and the chances of the world, be left unprovided for, to struggle with hardships still greater than those of dependence.

“ Till Captain Courtland has thought seriously on this subject,” said Peregrina, half choaking with her feelings, “ if I had any place to retire to, I would leave you, madam.”

“ I would

“ I would rather wish *him* to go ; but I know his temper too well to expect any sacrifice on his part. He is very sanguine : he will not believe you can be inflexible ; but, unless he is very much altered, he will wear off his chagrin by degrees, and flirt with the next pretty woman he meets with ; for Ham, with all his merit, and few young men have more, has a heart generally at every fair one’s service. He has been in love with all my friends’ daughters, by turns, and never been free from some violent passion since he came from school ; so that I cannot think, unless *you* have had the power of fixing him, he is in much danger of dying for love. However, your separation might be of use to both, though I know not how to part from you, even for the short time he will remain, poor fellow ! in England.—Your friend, Mrs. Birron, seems to wish for your company : she hinted it to me ; but she is not yet going, and to remain here with her would be as bad almost as being in my house.”

Peregrina, young-woman like, felt her pride a little hurt at hearing it suggested that her lover might be fickle, though his fickleness was the most likely means of rendering efficient her generous design. She was not inclined to believe Lady Cottisbrooke right: she had no idea that Hamilton would change his sentiments for her: for Miss Harriet Assington, indeed, they had changed; but it was prudence, not love, that had dictated to him there; and she had too far sported with her good fortune in attacking him. She therefore still wished she could for a short time absent herself, and again urged it.

Lady Cottisbrooke was called away to some morning visitors: she excused Peregrina's appearance, and went alone to receive them. Returning presently, she told the still-weeping girl that if she really, for her own ease, wished to absent herself, there was now a favorable opportunity for it. Mr. and Mrs. Blyford, and their family,

mily, had called to take leave : they were returning to their beautiful seat in Oxfordshire ; and Mrs. Blyford, on the part of her eldest daughter, made it her business to urge a visit from Miss Lamorne, as soon as Lady Cottisbrooke could prevail on herself to part from her. Her ladyship added, that she had so far accepted it, as to say that immediate change of air appeared to her necessary for Miss Lamorne's constitution, to which the sea was not friendly ; and Mrs. Blyford had proposed her returning now with them to Frandiston park : but it still remained an open contract, and she wished Peregrina could come down and settle it.

In the caprice of sorrow, Peregrina, now that she saw it probable she should go, began to repent her having proposed it ; but she soon conquered this weakness, and accepting Mrs. Blyford's kindness, she commissioned Lady Cottisbrooke to excuse her on the plea of indisposition, but to promise,

for her, that she would call at Mrs. Blyford's in the evening, to arrange all preliminaries. She then endeavored, by exertion, to increase her fortitude, and succeeded better than she had expected, comforted by the reflection that she had adhered to her duty; but still, though she had thought on nothing else all the time of dressing, it was impossible to believe Courtland could be fickle.

CHAP. XIX.

POOR Lady Almerina had remained in the dumps, and in disgrace, from the time of her return. She could neither go out, nor see any visitors; and Lady Cottisbrooke's behavior increased her troubles. It was very civil, but so perfectly regular that her heart was evidently out of the question; and there was a mystery about her which none could penetrate, till the family were this day rising from dinner. Captain Courland was out, so that the party consisted only of Ladies; and to them was introduced a little thick-set woman, dressed in an antique brocade, a large flapping black hat, a cap of the last century, and with a cloak which, the heat of the weather dispensing with it as a covering, she carried hung upon her arm.

The servant announced the name of *Mrs. Lound*; and Lady Almerina shrieking faintly, seemed anxious only to escape.

“ *Your sarvant, ladies,*” said the stranger, curtsying in her best style.—“ *Pray dunna let me distarb you.*”

“ No, no, *Mrs. Lound*, you do not disturb us,” said Lady Cottisbrooke encouragingly. “ Come, and sit next me.”

The dame obeyed. “ *I comed, my lady, as soon as iver I could, after your molancholy letter: but our steage was sot off; so I were forced to take, you see, double horse as far as the Lord knows where.*”

“ Well, well, *Mrs. Lound*, you are come in very good time.—I thought it right to send to you, though I am very sorry to make you a party in this disagreeable business.”

“ *But*

“ But pray,” said Mrs. Lound, “ which of these smart misses is my great niece? for I have not seed her sin she were a babe in arms.”

“ That is your niece,” said Lady Cottisbrooke, bowing towards Lady Almerina, who could scarcely support her situation.

Mrs. Lound, who was next to her, offered to take her hand, as if, by holding her fast, she could the better investigate her features.

The indignant lady withdrew it, and hastened out of the room.

Miss Lamorne, imagining that, as this Mrs. Lound was a person whose name she had never heard, her business might be private, followed Lady Almerina; and Lady Essex, of course, went with her. With every expression of distress and despair, Lady Almerina beckoned Peregrina

into her apartment, and there disclosed to her the mystery of Mrs. Lound, intreating her most earnestly to interest herself once more for her, with Lady Cottisbrooke, against the fate she saw impending over her devoted head. She stated this Mrs. Lound to be the sister of her grandfather's wife, and a woman of the lowest rank, vulgar and illiterate to the last degree: she said, her grandfather had irreconcilably offended all his family by his marriage, which had nothing but the rustic beauty of his wife to excuse it, and that this woman had scarcely ever been noticed by any of her great relations; that she was, it was true, the only person in the world she was connected with by consanguinity; and that she saw it was Lady Cottisbrooke's intention most cruelly to revenge her juvenile indiscretion, which was nothing more than happened every day, and which, in her idea, merited very little blame, by giving her up to this great abominable aunt.

And,

And, indeed, Lady Almerina's sagacity could not, in this instance, be charged with misleading her ; for, before Peregrina could suggest either hope or consolation, her ladyship was summoned to the parlor to hear her sentence. She intreated her friend to go with her ; and Lady Cottisbrooke in the mildest terms, but with the most hopeless firmness, informed her, that, as she was at *years of discretion*, her authority over her as a ward had ceased, and that, as it was in vain to attempt protecting where there was no power of control, she must beg to decline any farther charge of her, and recommend it to her, as her only surviving relation, to accept of Mrs. Lound's willingness to admit her into her family.

Lady Almerina was furious at the proposition ; nor would her aunt have borne with patience the language her wounded feelings dictated, had she not been flattered by the idea of exhibiting her right ho-

norable relation to the farmers' wives who formed her society, and who sometimes treated her with contempt for her rigid parsimony and *ungenteel* manners; nor was the good lady uninfluenced by the prospect of receiving for her ladyship's board what she knew she could pinch into *a very equitable* compensation. With fondness, still more disgusting than the asperity of her natural deportment, she tried to coax her niece into a willing acquiescence; and finding that fail, she set before the young lady the sacrifice of character she had made, in a way not much calculated to excite liberality of sentiment, or to cheer the sufferer with hopes of lenity.

Lady Almerina, half distracted, took Peregrina's hand, and begged Lady Cottisbrooke to hear her in another room.— There, on her knees, she intreated to be spared the punishment prepared for her; and, making Peregrina join her, she promised

mised the utmost docility, duty, and affection, might she but be permitted to remain, even a prisoner, where she was. She confessed her follies; she vowed a thorough reformation of conduct: she offered to write penitential letters to the marquis's father, and to Lord Cottisbrooke; nay, there was nothing that was mean, that her ladyship's haughty spirit would not have submitted to, rather than have passed a winter on a Kentish farm with her aunt.

Lady Cottisbrooke, aware of the elasticity of hope, would not be too yielding; but having for some time stood out, she at length, after a very sensible and affectionate admonition, consented again to receive the penitent on these conditions:—that the next act of levity, stubbornness, or imprudence, should be punished by *rural exile*; that she, during a few days which it was designed Mrs. Lound should pass at Margate, should conduct herself respectfully

fully towards her ; and that, for the future, she should acknowledge and be kind to her as a relation.

With these terms Lady Almerina joyfully complied. She embraced Lady Cottisbrooke with tears of gratitude, and her intercessor with affection : they rejoined the old lady ; and Peregrina soon after left them, to make her promised call on Mrs. Blyford.

Lady Almerina's distresses had somewhat called off her attention from her own ; but in her solitary walk to Cecil-square, she could not but ruminate on the little good *she* derived from the revolution of events. She was still as dependent as ever : she saw no end of dependence : accidents might separate her from the friends she relied on ; and where was she to seek others ? or how was it probable that she could recommend herself ?—she who had so little to boast, and
so

so much to conceal ! Her heart sunk, as she waited for admission at Mr. Blyford's ; for her visit was a preliminary to a separation from Lady Cottisbrooke ; but she thought it a sacrifice due to Courtland's peace ; and she did not hesitate, though she reluctantly yielded.

The family, with whom she was now about to connect herself by intimacy, was one of the most amiable description. It consisted of Mr. Blyford, a man of intellect and education, who carried on an important mercantile concern in London ; Mrs. Blyford, who sunk uncommon endowments of mind and person in the domestic cares of a wife and mother ; and eight sons and daughters, the eldest of whom had not attained her sixteenth year. They were Quakers, but of the most liberal opinions, and seemed so far to have improved on religious dissension, as to extract from it all

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that

that was good, with a just rejection of its errors.

Their house in Oxfordshire, where they most resided, was a temple sacred to all the social virtues ; and, even in the heterogeneous dissipation of a bathing-place, their suavity of manners, the decency of their deportment, and the beneficence that marked their footsteps, distinguished them far more than the peculiarity of their simple dress, or their colloquial deviations from practice. It was impossible to see them, without a wish for acquaintance with them : it was as impossible to be acquainted, without loving them ; and if Peregrina *must* be parted from Lady Cottisbrooke, and dear Mrs. Birron was otherwise engaged, she thought she could be as tranquil with the Blyfords as with any family ; and tranquillity was all she sought for.

Where

Where on one side there was a sincere desire, and on the other, if not a decided preference, at least an acquiescence, there was not much to settle. Mr. and Mrs. Blyford meant to set out the next day but one; but, for Miss Lamorne's convenience, offered to delay their journey. She, if her going was advisable, wished it to be speedy: the early appointment was therefore no objection; and Martha Blyford, the eldest of the young people, with delight obtained her promise not to fail her.

The regard she involuntarily paid Mrs. Halnaby, and still more *Mrs. Birron*, prompted her, before she turned towards Lady Cottisbrooke's, to call in Hawley-square, to acquaint them with her intended departure. She was not without some hope of obtaining from the younger of these ladies a promise of her correspondence; but all her wishes were defeated, by hearing that they had been suddenly called away at
noon,

noon, by some unforeseen accident at home — what it was, the person remaining in the house knew not; but there was no chance of their return.

More disturbed than she herself thought reasonable on such an occasion, she dragged homewards, and found Lady Almerina impatiently expecting her, to receive her reiterated thanks, and to advise with her as to the style of a letter she was manufacturing to appease Lord Cottisbrooke; for still to lose the earl, however little she *loved* him, was the bitterest part of her punishment.

It was indeed a delicate business to frame such a letter; but what Lady Almerina had written was very passable, and Peregrina advised her rather to make use of her own expressions than to borrow; but she could not get a dispensation from adding a post-script, which her ladyship, with profuse
acknow-

acknowledgments of a superiority never before admitted, besought her to add, to propitiate the earl in her favor. Peregrina knew she was in possession of an argument that might have efficacy ; but this she did not chuse to entrust to any one, more particularly was she averse to informing of his lordship's faults the woman who had so many of her own. In covert language therefore she obeyed her, and wrote :

“ At Lady Almerina's earnest request, Peregrina Lamorne presumes to add her petition for a candid allowance for, and forgiveness of, the errors so humbly acknowledged, and so atoned for, by the penitence of this letter. She trusts Lord Cottisbrooke will not insist on her using stronger arguments, which she assures him she has in reserve, and will not fail to make use of, to testify her concern for Lady Almerina, should his lordship withhold

hold the forgiveness she condescends to solicit."

This duty of charity discharged, she devoted the rest of the evening to writing to Ami Bonange; from whom the next morning's post brought her the following consolatory letter :

" I HAVE bestowed, my dearest madam, the whole of my attention, and the utmost energies of my art, on your situation. I know what are the dictates of your prudence, and in what strict conformity to them you have acted :—what are those of your heart, you must teach me yourself.

" Do you love Hamilton Courtland ?—If you do, upon my honor, I will remove the obstacles to your union.—I have it in my power, and it *shall* be in my inclination, if it is your wish ; for I have no other than

to

to make you, if happiness could be conferred on mortals, happy.

“ Be sincere with me, Peregrina. I believe Courtland deserves you ; for though he is laughed at for his universal adorations, and his gallery of beauties, I think you have fixed his heart. He is an honest fellow, and I am confident will deserve you, by his future conduct.

“ I tell you, it is in my power to remove all impediments.—Trust me, then, I do not mean to add to them.—I only would fairly inform you, that hereafter you may not reproach me, that, should you accept Courtland, as you safely may—as you will no longer need my protecting care, I shall cease to trouble you.

“ Should you reject Courtland, in pity to the feelings of a sincere, a guileless heart, I wish you could, amongst any
other

other of your friends than those you are at present with, pass a few weeks.—Write immediately your real sentiments to

Your ever faithful

AMI BONANGE.”

Here, in the generosity of one she knew not otherwise than by a reiteration of the most important kindnesses, were offered to her the means, not only of extricating herself from every difficulty, but of uniting herself for ever with those friends, of whose regard she was the best ascertained.—The idea raised her spirits, and enabled her to continue, with more vigor than she had begun, the preparations for her removal, which her native delicacy would not suffer her to dispense with. She could not so immediately answer all parts of Ami Bonange’s letter as by that post : she therefore only added, to that she had already written, a postscript,

postscript, promising farther communications as soon as she should be settled at Frandiston park, and then bent her thoughts wholly to her journey, which, sanctioned as it would be, she now knew, by Ami's approbation, appeared less a matter of compulsion than of choice.

Nothing occurring to impede her scheme; and Courtland, either by his own or by his mother's contrivance, remaining from home, she bid a painful adieu to Lady Cottisbrooke. Poor Lady Essex could scarcely be restrained from following her, and Lady Almerina seemed affected at the parting, and condescended to enjoin Peregrina to write to her.

With feelings which decreased as she increased her distance from those who had excited them, and very much comforted by reflecting that, though she had on motives of propriety removed from Margate,
it

it was in her power to return and be at peace there, she reached London in company with Mr. and Mrs. Blyford and their two eldest daughters, the rest travelling in chaises that followed their carriage. They were to remain in town only a few days, and then to set off for Frandiston park.

CHAP. XX.

THE business which had recalled Mrs. Halnaby and Joanna to Chartham, was of the most unpleasant kind. It was a letter from Lord Armathwaite, who was still in London, and who had been applied to by the governess of the school at which he had placed Miss Byram, with a request to see him immediately.

The young lady had, from the time of her admission, conducted herself in a way that led the governess almost to suspect that her friends had conceived her house to be a repository for insanity. Nothing could be more perverse than her conduct ; and it was soon found, by experience, that no one of the methods, either of coercion

or indulgence, practised in the school, at all applied to her peculiar case. Human vigilance could not do more than was done to guard against the disposition she, from the moment of her entrance, manifested to get away; but against Miss Byram the father of deceit himself could scarcely have been prepared; and she was on the point of escaping, when her intention was discovered, and Lord Armathwaite was compelled to take her away, and restore her to the unfortunate Joanna, who, with a heavy heart, went home to receive her.

To shame Miss Byram was a stranger: no reproach could reach her; punishment served but to harden her; indulgence made her insolent; persuasion she derided; what she made others suffer she sometimes took for hypocrisy; at other times for matter of sport: in short, a mind, in itself bad, was totally subverted by neglect in her education; and scarcely any thing could exceed her depravity.

Yet

Yet could not Joanna, to whom every tie of life, heart-rending as it was to her, was dear, entirely exclude this her supposed offspring from her care. When urged to leave her to herself, her constant reply was, “ I would, were she not so like her father ; but when I look at her, and recollect how dear she once was to my hopes, I forget the misery she makes me suffer.”

It was, however, become now absolutely impossible to treat her as one of the family ; and, under the care of a resolute woman, paid enormously for the purpose, she was kept a sort of state prisoner, being allowed only to walk in the garden for exercise, and compelled to do a certain portion of work or to fast. On the least appearance of merit, her situation was mended ; but she rarely put her friends to the trouble of altering their system.

Lord Armathwaite and Mrs. Halnaby perceiving the power this ill-conditioned girl still retained of tormenting Joanna, against whom she seemed to have some secret spite, discussed with her the arguments for and against indulging her bias in religion, and ridding themselves of her by sending her to one of the few existing convents on the Continent; but to this, though the most likely means of releasing herself, she could not consent. She thought deeply of the immorality of encouraging her in what she herself conceived to be religious error; and however indifferent it might appear of what class of Christians a *good* mind might be, she saw that such a one as Miss Byram's would find the most pernicious shelter in a religion that she thought afforded her almost an impunity in sinning. Beside, in the continental turbulences no institution was safe; and she shuddered at the idea of her being thrown on the world, though perhaps the
 young

young lady herself would have wished for no better sport. On these humane considerations she preferred enduring her lot, and only wished she could endure it alone.

Such friends as her's were not to be driven from her by her misfortunes, or the gloom they produced; and Lord Armathwaite foreseeing the probability that she might need active protection, no longer forbore to urge her fulfilling her promise to him. She had no plea against him; but for her own happiness she had so entirely lost all solicitude, that in her acquiescence she had no impulse but a wish to reward, as far as was in her power, the steadiness of his long attachment to her, and to calm the anxiety of Mrs. Hainaby, lest she might, by sudden death, leave her friendless.

In Chartham church, therefore, with as much privacy as possible, and with sensa-

tions scarcely less painful than those which had accompanied her former marriage, she gave her hand to Lord Armathwaite the last week in September; and to divert her thoughts from the scene of her anxieties, Mrs. Halnaby proposed a visit to her house in Berkshire, a circumstance which, had poor Peregrina known it, would have beyond measure delighted her, as it was but a few miles from Frandiston Park.

But this remove was for the present deferred by the illness of Miss Byram, who having escaped her governess's vigilance, and wandered into the woods till she was thoroughly cold and wet, had destroyed the hopes of Mrs. Halnaby, and relieved the fears of Joanna, by returning late at night, when she had the pleasure of awaking the servants to dry her clothes, and find her a supper. She was sent to bed in disgrace; and the next morning her spirit seemed somewhat subdued by a violent cold,

cold, which she was persuaded must kill her.

In this situation it was impossible for humanity to quit her. She grew worse every hour; and her obstinacy returning as her first fright wore off, she persisted in that refusal of medicine and discipline which was the most likely to rid her friends of all farther trouble.

Days and weeks Miss Byram's existence hung on the most doubtful thread, while she experienced from Lady Armathwaite, without the smallest token of acknowledgement on her part, every assiduity that humanity or maternal care could prompt. It was distraction to her ill-requited friend to think on her dying in her present temper of mind; but it was impossible to wake her out of it; for to all serious suggestions of the importance of religion at all times, but in particular in the hour of sickness, she replied by saying she should

do

do very well, and by kissing the Agnus Dei she swore as a charm; and this ridiculous act of devotion was robbed even of the little credit due to superstition, by the language of her features which accompanied it, and which seemed to say, I am more cunning than any of you, for I know how to cheat Heaven itself.

Can it be possible, said Joanna to herself, in the agony of her heart, that this girl's interests are found?—Can eighteen years have heaped up such a load of moral turpitude?—Can there be such cause, as I fancy, to fear for the eternal state of a creature who so short a time has experienced the corruption of the world?

In eight and twenty days the matter seemed almost decided; and Lady Armathwaite, worn to a state of weakness almost as great as the patient's, was forced out of the room, that she might not see her recover,

ver, for the last time, from a state of insensibility, the precursor of her dissolution.

It was the dead of night when she quitted her; and on the stairs she met a servant, who in haste was bringing her a letter. She could attend to no business, and it was carried to Lord Armathwaite, who was sitting below stairs with Mrs. Halnaby. A special messenger had brought it, and must have an immediate answer; he was in a post chaise, and seemed to expect some one to go back with him. The letter was from Lady Jemima to Miss Byram, and in very few words requested her to leave Chartham instantly with the bearer, who would conduct her to Coventry, where she waited to see her on business of the utmost importance.

Lord Armathwaite suspecting this to be some ill-executed plan of the dying girl's, in which his sister might or might not be concerned,

concerned, returned as an answer only these words :

“ Miss Byram lies at the point of death.”

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.

J O A N!!!

A

NOVEL.

BY

MATILDA FITZJOHN.

You have no great pretensions to wit or sprightliness of genius.—I grant it.

MARC. ANTONIN.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. IV.

LONDON:

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J O A N ! ! !

CHAP. I.

IT was a deep scheme that had occasioned the embassy to Chartham ; and to explain it, we must carry back our readers to the time when poor intoxicated Dennis was dismissed from Sir Clifford Byram's service. He had been kindly received by the clergyman whom Sir Clifford had permitted to take him, and looked forward with eager expectation to the end of his year, when he was to return to a

VOL. IV. B family

family his very soul, notwithstanding his occasional ill treatment, and his consequent resentments, loved. The name of his present master was Broome : Sir Clifford had lately called him to that part of the country, by bestowing on him the living of A—; induced to this kindness by recollecting him as Lambert's early friend. Broome found his good patron a valuable neighbor, and disposed, as far as Mr. Laffiter would permit, to be every body's friend ; but he was obliged in all his tête-à-tête conversations with him to be particularly cautious, lest he should betray an important secret he bore in his bosom respecting the deceased Lambert Byram—no less a secret than his having, while resident in Yorkshire, nearly twenty years before married him and Joanna Doveridge. Sir Clifford's disinclination to speak of his family, it is true, spared Broome much trouble ; but it at the same time mortified him, as he wished much to have known some particulars respecting the fate of

Lambert's

Lambert's first wife, and whether there remained any issue of that marriage.

Mr. Broome, who in a hard struggle through the world, had now and then seen the wrong side of human nature, was not slow in decyphering the character of Mr. Laffiter : he had known some such men before ; and having generally observed that their own interest was their sole object, and that in their contempt of restriction they generally over-reached themselves, he made himself master of this gentleman's particular views, and suffered him to go on unmolested, arguing from the dogmata of his studies, that if *centrifugal motion increases as the squares of the distances increase*, Mr. Laffiter's velocity must, *vice versa*, increase in the same proportion as he drew near the centre of his wishes, and that his celerity must be, like that of Phaëton, his destruction.

He therefore heard all his boastings, when at a distance from Sir Clifford, of his

unbounded influence over *that weak old man*, with silent comment; and suffered him at the book-club, the bowling-green, and in the vestry, to give uninterrupted hints, that a few years, and his own industry and genius, would render him the first man in the parish. His tone, indeed, had been somewhat lowered by some unfortunate symptoms of wrong-headed positiveness the *weak old man* had shewn in his qualified severity towards *that profligate wretch*, Dennis Geoghegan, whom, in his great assiduity for worthy Sir Clifford's interest, he had wished to remove entirely, as he gladly would have done all his other faithful servants, from access to him. And, indeed, in this particular he had been fortunate, for having lost his wife, who might have been a good spy, he had placed her sister, Mrs. Brown, formerly Lady Jemima's servant, at the head of Sir Clifford's domestic arrangements; and large would have been his profits from *this coup de main*, had not the old gentleman

man unfortunately very soon so far taken a dislike to Mrs. Brown, that though he could not, after what Mr. Laffiter had said of her, doubt her great merits, he seldom wished to see her; and his ears unhappily coinciding in sentiment with his perverse eyes, he as seldom desired to hear her. But this prejudice, there was no doubt, time would conquer; nothing more was necessary than to keep busy informers at a distance; and as Mr. Laffiter's *convivial pleasantry*, his *good song*, his *dexterity in carving*, his *deep information in politics*, and his *universal talents*, made him generally *necessary* in company, there was little danger that any thing he was not aware of should reach Sir Clifford.

Thus watched as was the old gentleman by his worst enemy, and thus controuled by fear, as was his modest friend, it would have been impossible for him to have obtained the least information to be depended on concerning the companion of his stu-

dies, Lambert Byram, had it not been for the accident that made Dennis his domestic; and even from him he could learn nothing respecting Miss Doveridge, not only whose marriage, but whose name he dared not mention, since it was evident that no *first wife* of Mr. Byram's was known of. He could only learn from Dennis that there was a young female, supposed by the family to be a natural daughter of Mr. Byram's, who was kept with the utmost privacy at the house in the north, that she had no other name than *Elizabeth*, that Mr. Byram always seemed to love her more than either of his children by Lady Jemima; but that her situation was rendered more than ever mysterious by his having disclaimed her as his *natural daughter*, and that he had expired in her arms. To this account, which Mr. Broome was forced to distil at various times from the fog of Dennis's intellects, his informer was always prompt to add the most enthusiastic commendation of this nameless

Elizabeth;

Elizabeth; but to his inquiries after her fate, subsequent to the death of Lambert, he could only answer with tears, that to learn it was the purpose of his fatal journey to London, where she had been placed by Lady Jemima, but that he feared from the ill success of his researches, that she had been a very naughty girl, and yet somehow he thought folks belied her, for she was such a *fwate crater*.

Early in the month of September, Sir Clifford was seized with an illness that threatened his life, though not immediately; and Mr. Broome was greatly terrified lest he might quit the world in the ignorance and indifference towards his family in which Lassiter had so scrupulously kept him. He therefore one day, when he visited him to inquire after his night's rest, took the opportunity of Lassiter's absence, and Mrs. Browne's petulant dismissal from the sick-room, to express an humble hope that Sir Clifford did not retard his reco-

very by that anxiety of mind which generally attends unsettled worldly affairs. He intreated pardon, but he thought it his duty to mention it.

“ I see your motive, Mr. Broome, and am obliged to you for the hint. I know my case to be dangerous, and I have this morning spoken to Lassiter, and given him instructions about my will. It will be a very short business; I shall leave almost all I have to one distant relation, for since I have lost my son, I have no body to care for: those he has left behind him, I am sure are not to be trusted with money.”

“ Do you mean Lady Jemima and her daughter?”

“ Yes; who else should I mean?”

“ Forgive me, Sir; there was, I am told, another young person who claimed Mr. Byram's protection.”

“ Yes,

“ Yes, yes, as a ward, as a ward, she did—I have heard of her—but she was only a ward—nothing more than a ward; and Laffiter tells me her friends reclaimed her, and she is very well married in India.”

“ I do not know, Sir; I should be sorry to offend you, or to doubt Mr. Laffiter’s superior information, but I am persuaded this young person was Mr. Byram’s daughter, and an elder daughter too.”

“ No, Sir, no such thing, I assure you; it was once, I know, suspected, but my son himself denied it. I am convinced it was no such thing—the Byrams have known no blot in their escutcheon, at least *my* branch of the family—no natural children amongst us, Sir, I assure you.”

“ Have patience with me, I beseech you, Sir Clifford; I mean no injury to

the honour of your family ; but as it is one of the first offices of charity to plead the cause of the fatherless, I hold it my peculiar duty to discharge it."

" You are a very conscientious man, Mr. Broome, and I like you the better for it ; I wish we had more such—I will hear you. If the young woman, be she who she may, be unfortunate, I am disposed to do what I can for her ; but I tell you, she is well married, and no child of my son's. I would rather be kind to her as a stranger, than as an illegitimate branch of the Byram family."

" The person I allude to is no illegitimate branch, nor do I think any such exists in your family ; but I hear she was brought up with great privacy at Mr. Byram's at Balla-craig, that he took great pains in her education, and was particularly fond of her—that he died in her
arms.

arms.—Forgive me for recalling your grief, Sir—I was too impetuous.”

“ Go on—it cuts me to the heart to think of my poor boy—but go on, Mr. Broome, I am obliged to you.”

“ I too, Sir, have heard that Mr. Byram denied to your man, Dennis, that this was his natural daughter; but *I* am convinced these were words intended only as a prelude to his avowing her to be, as from my soul I believe her, his LEGITIMATE daughter: and by all account, a daughter to be boasted of.”

“ It is impossible,” replied Sir Clifford, in an universal terror. “ It cannot be, Mr. Broome; would to God it were so! I might then have *one* comfort—I should not then *know* them all to be wicked and cruel—but it cannot be.”

“ It *can* be, and my spirit says it is. Can you,” added Broome, in a supplicating

eating tone and posture, “forgive an indiscretion of your son’s ? Can you forgive me for aiding it ?”

“ Proceed ; he has long had my pardon, and I forgive every thing.”

“ Then, Sir, near twenty years ago I married him when I was settled in Yorkshire—I married him to a young woman whose attraction and various excellence might have claimed praise rather than pardon for his unfunctioned love.”

“ And who—who—who was this young woman ? you shake my nerves to atoms.”

“ Be calm, good Sir, the story is simple, and ought not to agitate you. Her name was Doveridge—at least by that name I knew her.”

“ What, was she of the extinct baron’s family ?”

“ I be-

“ I believe so.”

“ Odsso ! Why did not Lambert tell me he liked her ? it was a good family, an honourable family ; I could have had no objection. I think too I have seen her ; she was at Bath about the time you mention, and a very pretty girl. Why did not Lambert say he loved her ?”

“ She had no money.”

“ O no—now I recollect—her father died very poor—but she was of a good family.”

“ You were bent on his match with Lady Jemima.”

“ True, I remember, I thought well of her then. And what then became of my son's wife ?”

“ She

“ She died, I suppose, previous to his consenting to your wish.”

“ I am very sorry for it!—I remember he changed his mind all on a sudden after being very obstinate—but I little thought, Mr. Broome, what I was doing, or, I assure you, I would not have done it.”

Sir Clifford then made Mr. Broome relate all the particulars of his son's first marriage. The detail was just finished when Laffiter entered, in a fright at hearing how long the parson had been closetted : he scouled at him as he paid his sneaking compliments to his sick patron ; and then having seen Mr. Broome out, took his place by the bedside, with a resolution to keep a sharper look-out in future.

Mr. Broome having expressed no wish that what he had related should be kept secret, Sir Clifford immediately, and with
indubi-

indubitable tokens of satisfaction, communicated the hopes he entertained that he might yet find one of his family deserving of his regard; and having related the circumstances he had just learnt, he waited Laffiter's answer.

“ Why, Sir,” answered the man of law, “ I really thought better—I entertained a better opinion of Mr. Broome's understanding, than to suppose he could have come to you with such a canting story as this: I could have told you as much long ago, if I had had less regard for Mr. Byram's credit, or the honour of your family; but, in my idea, family reputation is a very serious matter; and I would no more injure the character of an ancient family, such as your's, Sir Clifford, than my own.”

“ You are a very honest man, Mr. Laffiter, and have uniformly shewn yourself the friend of my family; but here is nothing

thing at all degrading; for Mr. Broome says he himself performed the marriage ceremony, and an alliance with the *Doveridges* is rather honourable than otherwise!"

" True, my dear Sir, provided the character of the lady herself had been unimpeached!"

" Why! was it not?"

" By no means, my dear Sir Clifford; and it was for that reason I wished you never to hear of this marriage. Would it have been, do you think, the part of a friend, such as I am, to have told you, without the smallest plea of justice, or prospect of benefit to any one, that your son, at an age when young men are excusable for loving indiscreetly, had married a woman of light character, but whose faults have been long since buried in the grave?"

" And

“ And *did* Byram do so ? ”

“ Undoubtedly—I could call many witnesses of it—Betsey Doveridge, as we used always to call her, when I was a young fellow about the inns of court, was always to be seen in the gay lounges of the town. There was a young nobleman, a particular friend of mine, for whom I used to transact a great deal of business in the money line, wanted sadly to have taken her as a *chere amie* ; but I believe your son was the obstacle, at least so he told me.”

“ Did you know her person ? ”

“ O yes, perfectly well ; she was pretty well known amongst us gay young fellows.”

“ Her appearance, when I saw her at Bath, was not at all that of such a female. Sure it could not be the same ! Was she you mean rather low, and *embonpoint* ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Yes.”

“ Had she a very fine complexion, with light eyes and hair ?”

“ Yes, exactly so.”

“ Was the tone of her voice very charming ? for I remember that particularly.”

“ She was remarkable for it.”

“ Yet, after all, it cannot be the same, for *this* Miss Doveridge was with a very respectable woman of my most intimate acquaintance.”

“ True, true ; Mrs.—Mrs.—I forget her name.”

“ Her name was Halnaby.”

“ Ay, ay, I knew her ; a very worthy woman indeed. I knew she did what she
could

could for Betſy ; but ſhe ran away from her, Sir Clifford ; Betſy was not to be controuled, ſhe was a girl of ſpirit.”

“ But how could my ſon think of marrying ſuch a woman ? ”

“ She had a well-hung *tongue*, Sir, as well as Mr. Broome, Sir. She found ſhe had a chance of being admitted into a good family, and a very ancient family, on honourable terms ; ſo ſhe made plea of her ſituation ; ſhe worked on Mr. Byram’s feelings ; ſhe put on demure airs, paſſed for a Magdalen Miſs :—he married her, and muſt have been ruined, had ſhe not died ſoon after the birth of her daughter.

“ She *did* then leave a daughter ? ”

“ She did, Sir ; but to my knowledge Mr. Byram, as he married her from ſuch a ſituation, when he came to know more of the world and of female arts, did not
 chuſe

chuse to consider this child as his: he brought her up, out of pure humanity, as a stranger; and he was particularly anxious that she should never be considered as disgracing his family by belonging to it. Lady Jemima, in *that* instance, I must say, behaved well; she did all that was to be done for her; she sent her over to an East Indian family in London, who got her out; and as I have told you before, she is very well married at Calcutta. I think it is—I forget the gentleman's name who married her—it is Brockford, or Brockhurst, or some such name; I really cannot charge my memory with it, for I have so much on my head; but I know he is immensely rich. But you were saying something last night about your will, Sir Clifford; when would you chuse I should take your directions for it?"

“ I should like to know first what is really become of this girl; for if she was born in wedlock, she is one of my family,

mily, and Mr. Broome speaks well of her."

" Mr. Broome ! Sir.—Mr. Broome can know nothing of her. What acquaintance can Mr. Broome have with her ? unless, indeed, he was *acquainted*, as he might be, I grant, with her mother."

" Do not be censorious, Laffiter ; Broome is a very worthy man, and I have a great regard for him."

" I have no jealousy, Sir, of Mr. Broome. Mr. Broome is nothing to me ; only mark the end of Mr. Broome's kindness in striving to render you unhappy."

" I cannot conceive that to be his view. I will, however, look into the affair. Mr. Broome speaks very highly of the young girl ; and Dennis, by his account, adores her."

" Dennis,

“ Dennis, indeed !—Dennis may have more reasons than one. I wonder what that idle fellow had to do in London !”

“ He is an honest fellow with all his faults, Laffiter. But, however, if I am at all better in the afternoon, I will write to Lady Jemima. I hope she is going on at Swansea a little better than heretofore : she will tell me what is become of the girl.”

“ Will you so ? old gentleman,” muttered Laffiter to himself, “ I will be beforehand with you.—Well, Sir, I must take my leave for the present. I dare say an hundred people are waiting for me at home. I hope I shall find you better, Sir Clifford, when I see you again.”

CHAP. II.

THE small distance between Sir Clifford's mansion and Mr. Laffiter's house in the town, was sufficient for his plotting head to contrive the defeat of a plan of benevolence; and he would immediately have resolved on a journey in person to Swansea, had he not feared the superior efficacy of Mr. Broome's arguments in his absence. He justly looked on the parson as his worst enemy; next to him he hated simple, blundering Dennis; and well he might hate him; for it is like fencing with a left-handed adversary when cunning has to deal with sterling integrity—such strokes are never to be parried.

But

But the anvil of his brains soon produced the means of removing one of these impediments, and perhaps the more formidable; for Dennis's enthusiasm in the cause of Elizabeth could never be restrained but by his fear that he might, as he had found heretofore, by blundering, exactly thwart his own designs; whereas Mr. Broome, aiming at nothing but rectitude, and believing Mrs. Byram to be dead, had no particular object to stimulate or to guide him. It was therefore Laffiter's intention to unite his forces with those of Lady Jemima, and to remove Dennis, by making him his messenger.

He was saved the trouble of seeking a pretext for a conference with honest Teague, by meeting him in the street with some vegetables he had been fetching from a distant garden. He accosted him with an unusual degree of condescension, and told him he had been just making a visit to Sir Clifford.

“ And how is my dare master, Sir?”

“ Very poorly, indeed, Dennis; it grieves me to see him drooping so fast. I would not have you tell what I say, because I hear the doctors are of a different way of thinking; but in my opinion, Sir Clifford is going down hill very fast.”

Poor Dennis set down his basket, and began to make faces, and to wipe his eyes.

“ I wished, honest Dennis, to have talked to you a little farther on this business, but you are not at leisure now, and I should not chuse Mr. Broome to know any thing about it; for between friends, Dennis, I do not think Mr. Broome at all a well-wisher to your dear master. I wished to have had a little talk with *you*.”

“ Mr. Broome not a well-wisher to my dare master! Why, Sir, he says he loves him!”

“ Aye, Dennis, so do many, for their own interest. I should have liked a little talk with you, because *you* are a sensible fellow, and love your master indeed.”

“ Why, Sir, as to that matter, if I can do my poor dare master any good by your spaking to me, I would come to you at your house presently, as soon as I have carried these things home ; for my master Broome is out, and so not at home at present.”

This was now agreed on, and Dennis soon followed to Laffiter's manufactory of law and iniquity. A dram of brandy was the preface, and Mr. Laffiter then, with a solemn countenance, and a sonorous tone of deep concern, thus addressed the Liffy's countryman.

I told you, my good Dennis, I could
, because you were a sensible, ho-

“ ”

trust you,
next fellow.

The

The flattery and the brandy were irresistible ; Dennis bowed, simpered, and looked duly *cullable*.

“ It is not every one I would trust on such an occasion, and as the matter is very important to your master, Sir Clifford—not to *me*, Dennis—you understand me—I shall not be a halfpenny richer or poorer for it—you understand me, Dennis.”

“ Yes, Sir, perfectly ; I know your honour is a very clever gentleman.”

“ Well then, you must promise me ; nay, you must swear to me, never to reveal what I am going to tell you.”

“ Never—if it is for my dear master’s good.”

“ I tell you it is ; what can I say more ?”

“ O dear, Sir, I dare say you are right, for you are a very clever gentleman ; but
C 2 my

my miserable thick skull is so apt to mistake, that I often make a bit of a blunder when I don't mean it. I will swear with all my soul, because I am sure such a gentleman would never deceive such an honest poor fellow as my swate self."

Mr. Laffiter then prescribed the form of adjuration—Dennis repeated it *verbatim*; and he proceeded.

"I see very clearly, that it is Mr. Broome's wish to set your old master against his family, that he may, if he dies (as I think it is probable he will do shortly) leave all his great wealth to a distant relation, a friend of Broome's I make no doubt. Now this is certainly, you see, Dennis, very dishonest."

"Very dishonest, indeed, Sir; it is almost as bad as being a rogue."

"The same thing exactly. Now, I want your assistance to prevent this."

Dennis

Dennis looked thoughtful; and then, on a corroboration of Laffiter's suppositions, he related to him the far-otherwise intencioned inquiries Mr. Broome had made concerning the family, and particularly Miss Elizabeth.

“ Aye, aye, replied Laffiter, it was for no good purpose depend on it, that he questioned you; but it is for the sake of this Miss Elizabeth, whom you seem so to love, that I want your services.”

“ Sir, I will go through fire and water, or both together, to serve her, a swate angel !”

“ Do you know, Dennis, what is become of her ?”

“ No, no,” he answered, shaking his head, and sighing deeply. “ If you wo'nt tell, Sir, I will tell you a secret. I hoped a little bit ago, that my master, Sir Clifford,

ford, was going to be ill and die, and then he would ask me about my young lady; so I went up to London, you see, on purpose to look after her; for I had heard where my lady, Devil burn her, had sent her; but I got nothing by my foolish head but a letter, with a partickler account of her, and that I lost when I lost my place."

"Aye, Dennis, I was mighty sorry for you then; I did what I could for you with Sir Clifford, but he was in such a passion he would not hear *me*."

"You, Sir; why, I thought you spoke again me!"

"No, Dennis, never; I do not know what *Mr. Broome* might do; but *I* did not I assure you—it is not my way to speak against poor servants—their character is their bread."

"But, Sir, Sir, *Mr. Broome* took me."

"Yes,

“ Yes, Dennis, he saw you was a good servant, and an honest fellow, so he had a mind to you himself—so what *I* said went for nothing.”

“ Lord love your swate face,” cried Dennis, in rapture, throwing his arms round Laffiter’s neck, with a violence that seemed to make the lawyer suspect he had met with speedy retribution, “ why I did not think it had been *you*.”

“ Well, well, Dennis,” cried Laffiter shaking him off, and putting his discomposed hair and linen to rights, “ all I want to know of you, is, whether, to serve this young lady you talk of, you would take a journey into Wales.”

“ I would take a journey even to London, Sir, again for her.”

“ Well, then, I have reason to believe that Lady Jemima is a very different kind

of woman from what she was. She has been very ill treated, Dennis; between friends I may tell *you* so."

" She is a devil, Sir."

" No, no, Dennis, the best of us have our faults; but she has been very kind to your young lady lately."

" That's more than ever she was while I knew her."

" Aye, but she is very much altered; and I know she is the only person that can prevent Mr. Broome's designs, and give me what information is necessary to persuade Sir Clifford to make this Elizabeth that you talk of, his heir."

" What then, will Miss Elizabeth be rich?"

" She

“ She *shall* be, Dennis, if you will do exactly as I bid you, and keep yourself sober.”

“ I will do any thing,” cried Dennis, in ecstasy; “ I would kill myself for the swate crater, for I shall be in haven if she is rich.”

He then, with tolerable patience, heard his instructions, which were to get over to Coventry that evening with a letter, which Mr. Laffiter would prepare; and there to take the mail, which would carry him to his destination: he was then to find Lady Jemima, deliver the letter to her, and wait her answer.

“ But what must I say to Mr. Broome about leaving him, Sir?”

“ Oh, that is the easiest matter in the world; only tell him faucily, that you have heard of a better place, and chuse to be dismissed;

he will only suppose you drunk, and that, I suppose, honest Dennis, is no very great miracle. But be sure you say nothing of having seen me—come, take another glass of brandy.”

Dennis went away perfectly satisfied, either with the arguments, or the liquor; and Mr. Broome not returning home by the time he was to meet Mr. Laffiter, he was too zealous in Miss Elizabeth’s cause to wait; he therefore did the most prudent thing he ever did in his life—he held his tongue; and trusting that his interest with Sir Clifford was not in the least endangered by his ingratitude to such a rogue as he supposed his present master, he quitted his service without remorse.

Mr. Laffiter had, against his arrival, framed the following letter to Lady Jemima:

“MADAM,

“ MADAM,

“ When I confess that my behaviour to you, while I had the honour to be employed by Sir Clifford Byram, in Dublin, was not only involuntary, but founded on the grossest misconception, I hope I need not add, that it has given me the sincerest concern, and that I should be happy to make any compensation in my power. An occasion now offers, in which I can prove my sincerity, and render you a most important service; and gladly, very gladly, do I embrace the opportunity.

“ You are, I presume, Madam, no stranger to the indecisive character of Sir Clifford, or to that weakness which renders him the prey of every designing sycophant. From a man of this description he is now in the utmost danger; and I see plainly that a very few weeks, nay, a few days, may convey the whole of his property into the hands of strangers. His

health is rapidly declining, and his intellects have been long going.

“ It is, as far as I can penetrate, the wish of the person whose art I dread, to set up some one to personate the natural daughter of Mr. Byram ; and for this purpose a letter is to be dispatched to you by to-morrow’s mail, for information respecting her : this letter, it is not to be doubted, will be dictated to Sir Clifford, if not written for him ; and should it, in spite of art, reach you, the answer I am confident will never arrive.

“ I therefore dispatch a special messenger to advise you, on no account, to give any information respecting this illegitimate daughter, to whom I am certain, in Sir Clifford’s present infatuation, he designs, however he may be circumvented, to leave every thing. By disabling him from doing so rash an act, you probably insure his dying without a will, which will ultimately, as
 3 his

his property stands, be much to the advantage of you, as Mr. Byram's widow, and of your daughters, as his co-heiresses.

“ The messenger I trust on this business is foolish Dennis Geoghegan ; he knows nothing of its import, but sets out under the persuasion, that it is for the advantage of Mr. Byram's natural daughter, whose cause he warmly espouses. Should you be fearful of his evidence, he will now be in your power ; and as, from the place where you are, you can very easily get him on board a merchant-man, I think I consult your interest in chusing him for the bearer of this.

“ I have only to add, that in whatever plan your Ladyship proposes, I shall be happy to aid you, and that you may depend on the secrecy of

“ Your's most devotedly,

“ W. LASSITER.”

CHAP. III.

LADY JEMIMA, whom this letter reached in due time, might, perhaps, have so far been taken in, as to suppose Mr. Lassiter meant well to Sir Clifford, had it not been for the finesse of chusing Dennis for his messenger, of whose fidelity she had often, to her great inconvenience, been convinced. In that part of his letter which respected the disposal of him, she saw the cloven foot, and she resolved, though she might be assisted by his services, not to be wholly guided by him.

Impressed with the idea of Sir Clifford's leaving *the whole of his property* to Elizabeth, she thought his dying intestate a contemptible chance; she had greater plans in

in view, and a far deeper game to play, than that Mr. Laffiter had dealt for.

She saw it would be far more prudent to support a claimant to his munificence, with whom, through superior influence, she might share the large bequest. Had she known where to seek Elizabeth, her natural hatred of her would have prevented her electing her again into her rightful situation; her thoughts immediately flew towards her own eldest daughter, whom she supposed partaking all the advantages of Lord and Lady Armathwaite's misplaced fondness. She believed it not impossible to withdraw her from them for a time, to get Sir Clifford's property privately secured to her, without the smallest recognition of her supposed mother; and then to procure, by persuasion or threats, from the young lady, such a portion for herself as would again set her afloat on the ocean of folly and extravagance.

She

She saw clearly, if not the *morality* the *prudence* of the measure her correspondent had recommended for the security of Dennis; and receiving the letter while she was in company with the captain of a coasting vessel, who was a small candidate for her favour, she mentioned to him the trouble she had frequently, and now more particularly suffered, from an idle, drunken retainer to her late husband's family. The captain, between jest and earnest, advised her to make the man drunk, and let him have him. The recipe was immediately followed; and when poor Dennis, late at night, wearied with his fatigue, and overcome with liquor, was thanking three or four men for their kindness in escorting him to his lodging, he found himself first hurried into a boat, and then hoisted on board a ship.

One impediment being thus removed, Lady Jemima had only one object to attend to, and she bent all the energy of her
mind

mind towards it. Her resolution of recalling Miss Byram being formed, she had only to do it in a way that might not defeat her expectations from the fondness of Lord and Lady Armathwaite; for she, though the parent of the young lady, knew less of her temper than the lowest servant of her family; her pride would not have allowed her to suspect it; and indeed Lady Jemima herself might be forgiven, if she had not sagacity enough to suppose any thing so bad as the reality. She, therefore, holding her brother's intellectual endowments very cheap; for it must be confessed he had not her Ladyship's talents; and taking it for granted, that the mother of Elizabeth must be some silly doting woman, made no doubt of their joint attachment towards any thing that could boast itself thus connected with them; and believing her daughter's interest and her own to be the same, she coveted for Miss Byram, that she might herself participate her gains.

To

To remove herself nearer to the scene of action, that she might at once watch Sir Clifford, her daughter, and Laffiter, was the next step she resolved on. Waiting only the arrival of the morrow's mail, which brought her such a letter as Mr. Laffiter had predicted, she wrote to her daughter Jemima, and dispatched a person she could depend on, with orders to make the utmost haste, and to take a post-chaise the last stage. The letter contained only an earnest request that Miss Byram would, on business of the utmost importance, meet her at Coventry; and it was that to which Lord Armathwaite replied, by saying, that the young lady lay then at the point of death.

Her Ladyship then, having arranged her domestic affairs, without returning any answer to Sir Clifford's letter, set off, unattended, in the stage coach, for Coventry; and in the prospect before her, forgot the humiliating circumstances to which her
arts.

arts had reduced her; for there was till now, no time of her life when, as Lady Jemima Fawley, or Lady Jemima Byram, she would not have disdained mingling with the *canaille* of a Welch stage coach.

In the place of her retirement, where she had remained rather *hoping* than *contented*, and where she lay perdue to watch the world's revolutions, she had conducted herself, at least with *external* credit. In the wane as were her personal charms, she still retained enough of the *haut ton* to be looked up to as some one of a superior order of beings—her title founded grand; she was an oracle of the great world; and having soon learnt, that unless she abated somewhat of the exaltation of her rank, she had no chance for society, she condescended, rather than be left always to the company of her own reflections, to take up with that the place afforded. The women in her heart she detested; but for the men, she had acquired such a habit of angling, that she could not desist from it,
even

even when they were not worth catching, and consequently whatever the Swansea belles might think of the lady of quality, the beaux all swore *to God* she was a charming *lady*.

To excuse the comparative penury of her situation, she had affected a relinquishment of the world, and a passion *for rural retirement* ever since the death of *her adored* Mr. Byram ; and always treating Swansea as only a temporary abode, which the claims the world had *on persons of distinction*, would not suffer her long to enjoy, she held herself and the minds of all who were admitted to her acquaintance in that state of preparation which prevented on her part all necessity of punctilio, and on their's all surprise of any of her proceedings. When she departed therefore from Swansea, she was supposed only to be gone to fulfil some of those claims the great world had on the great ; and her accepting so humble a conveyance, passed
for

for her Ladyship's great humility; and every modest girl in lower life, whose delicacy preferred staying at home to travelling thus unprotected, had it dinned in her ears, how much less pride the lady of quality had.

At Coventry she took a private lodging, hired a maid-servant for a month, and adopted the name and style of *Mrs. Bingham*, to whom, as to a friend, she was about to visit, she ordered her letters to be inclosed. Here she immediately requested an interview with Mr. Lassiter, who having in the course of his journey admitted another project into his overflowing imagination, prepared himself with much scrupulosity of dress, and many studied speeches, to obey her commands. He chose his destination to be a secret, even to his domestics and to his privy counsellor, Mrs. Browne; and so it remained, not even Mr. Broome suspecting it.

Her

Her Ladyship was yet as in a state of uncertainty respecting Miss Byram's acquiescence, which yet she could not doubt; but it determined her on no consideration to let Laffiter into her plan; she therefore only thanked him for his information, observed on the rectitude of Divine dispensations, which always end in the reward of the unjustly oppressed, and very coolly declared her intention of producing to Sir Clifford's notice the young woman in question.

“ Your Ladyship,” replied Laffiter, with a penetrating look, “ does not mean Elizabeth, the eldest daughter of the late Mr. Byram?”

“ Certainly I do; who else should it be?”

“ And from whence is *she* to be fetched?”

“ Fetched?—fetched? Mr. Laffiter, I do not understand such queries. Where
do

do you suppose I mean to fetch her from ?”

“ Come, come, my Lady,” replied Laffiter, whose impudence was never stunted for more than a minute, “ you and I are friends; and the sooner we understand one another the better.”

“ Understand !” repeated the lady; “ I am sure, Sir, I do not understand *you*, and I fancy you *chuse to misunderstand me*.”

“ Why, Madam, it is that I *may* understand you that I ask for an explanation, I ask again from what place is this Elizabeth to be fetched ?”

“ Why, from the friends she is with.”

“ Who are those friends ?”

“ My brother.”

“ So

“ So I thought, my Lady. Now that was exactly what I wanted to know. I see now what you are driving at.”

“ Well, Sir ?”

“ And well, Madam, too. I would advise your Ladyship to be a little careful in this scheme ; I told you you had better make a friend of me at once.”

“ I desire, Sir, you will explain yourself, or I shall desire you may be shewn out of the house. I thought, Mr. Lafiter, you talked of doing me *service*.”

“ Yes, Madam, but you must not think to trick me. You may as soon think of deceiving the devil himself as me. I know what your plot is ; I know you cannot produce this Elizabeth, for you have sent her to the East Indies. You have transferred the care of your own eldest daughter to your brother, doubtless with an intention

tention of passing her off for Elizabeth, from whence I conjecture that *the Mrs. Byram* Lord Armathwaite is, I see by the papers, married to ——”

“ My brother married ? ”

“ Yes, Madam, married.”

“ And to whom did you say ? ”

“ To Mrs. Byram ; and much ado I had to prevent Sir Clifford’s hearing of it.”

“ What, had the woman the impudence to assume the name of Byram ! ”

“ Yes, my good Lady, and by all account she had a better right to it than some other folks, for *she* was undoubtedly Mr. Byram’s lawful wife.”

“ What ! and had he the wickedness to marry *me* when his former wife was living ? ”

“ Had your Ladyship never any intimation before your marriage, that he was privately married ? ”

“ I heard, indeed, that he kept a mistress ; but I could not have thought —— ”

“ Come, come, Madam,” said Laf-
fiter, familiarly taking her Ladyship’s
hand ; “ do not let us waste time in squab-
bling ; you and I have but one interest. I will
deal very plainly with you. My poor dear
wife, who has been dead these three months,
was sister to your servant, Mrs. Browne,
who was not always perhaps as careful of
your secret affairs as she should have been.
This Mrs. Browne is now at the head of
Sir Clifford’s family. I placed her there ;
for I can do any thing with the old man.
When I have given you this information,
I leave

I leave you to judge how far it is prudent to introduce, without my acquiescence, a person whose pretensions are controvertible."

Lady Jemima was overwhelmed by the torrent of power she saw turned against her. She repented most sincerely the having taken any step without Laffiter; and laying aside every appearance of reserve, she professed herself ready to concur in any scheme he should propose for the securing Sir Clifford's property from those who had the best right to it.

Nothing could be done till the fate of the embassy to Chartham was decided: the parties therefore could only agree in a general scheme of action, which being settled, Mr. Laffiter returned to his home with a promise to be again at Coventry on the day when the messenger was expected, till whose arrival no answer could be returned to Sir Clifford's letter.

CHAP. IV.

THE necessity of Laffiter's absence gave his adversary an opportunity no art could frustrate, of pleading the cause of Elizabeth, whose pretensions might have suffered by the unaccountable defection of her friend Dennis, had not Mr. Broome been always at hand to dispel her grandfather's doubts, and to controvert the conclusions he seemed disposed to draw. In fretful impatience, Sir Clifford waited Lady Jemima's answer, and raved at her delay : his head was now so full of Elizabeth and his schemes for her, that he gave little heed to what Laffiter had said to ruin her and her mother in his estimation. Mr. Broome honestly preached the cruelty of prejudging a young person
by

by the failings of a parent, even supposing Mrs. Byram to have been the *Betsy Dovernidge* of Mr. Laffiter's acquaintance, which, together with Mr. Dennis's having deserted his service *to avoid the fangs of the law*, were two hardy assertions of that gentleman's, which Mr. Broome confessed he could not subscribe to.

Sir Clifford, though too much inclined to think the last speaker right, and now so habituated to the tyranny of his attorney, that he scarcely thought any one else could protect him, still felt very strongly how much greater would be the pleasure of rendering, by his will, an oppressed orphan independent and happy, than that of adding to the misused wealth of a very distant relation; and his antipathy to Lady Jemima and her children being, however it fluctuated, equal to his former doting partiality for her, he was resolved, let her reformation be ever so complete, that a decent provision should be the whole

of their inheritance from him. This resolution, and his eagerness towards Elizabeth, Laffiter soon found it so impossible to get rid of, that he began to think it would be wiser to adopt Lady Jemima's plan than his own, and to set up *some* Elizabeth immediately.

Never negligent, good man ! where his own interests were concerned, he was at Coventry early on the day appointed, and found Lady Jemima in the utmost need of his advice and consolation. The messenger was returned—her daughter was dying.

Laffiter began to talk of the universality of death, his own resignation to the loss of his wife, &c. &c. He was proceeding most piously.

“ For Heaven's sake,” interrupted the lady, “ hold your tongue, Mr. Laffiter ; I should not care a rush about the girl's
situa-

situation, but she cannot *come*—think what is now to be done.”

Laffiter was outdone—he was awed—he felt small, for *he* once had lost a child, and *he* had *sorrowed* for it. The lady’s voice and philosophy rallied his fugitive wits, but he could only repeat, “ay, what is now to be done?”

“ Sir Clifford’s letter must be put off no longer,” said her Ladyship—“ it must be answered ; I could perhaps in it make such an apology as would procure me time enough to send over to Dublin for Arabella ; she might answer the purpose as well.

“ ’Tis a good thought ; but will she not appear too young ? ”

“ No, she was always a very stout girl of her age, and used to look as old as Elizabeth.”

“ Can she be depended on ? ”

“ I think she might, if I had the tutoring her, and she was convinced it was for her own interest.”

This measure was immediately concluded on. Lady Jemima disdaining the aid of Lassiter's square-nibbed pen, wrote herself to Sir Clifford in fluent and respectful language, lamenting the inevitable delay of her reply, professing herself extremely happy that she could give the best account of Miss Elizabeth, for whom she had dispatched a trusty friend, who would escort her from the only retreat it had been in her power to procure for her ; and promised to wait on Sir Clifford in person, as soon as she should arrive, which would not perhaps be in less than a fortnight. This letter, to save delay, Lassiter was to carry back with him, and forward to Byram Hall, as brought by a private conveyance from Swansea.

Prefuming

Prefuming on the certainty of their fuccefs, the parties next planned their own feveral advantages, having previously agreed that Mrs. Browne fhould be made privy to the bufinefs, and promifed a fpecific fum for her taciturnity. Lady Je-mima had imagined that Laffiter would be contented with large pay for his trouble, and felt not a little difconcerted when he talked firft of *going halves*, and then abating, of dividing the property into three portions, with one of which he would be content. It was her Ladyfhip's plan to compel her daughter to engage herfelf, in confideration of her maternal endeavours, to make her a large allowance out of her income, whenever it fhould be her's, and as the penalty of refusal would be the difclofure of the ruinous fecret, fhe did not doubt that this would fupply the want of efficacy in the contract of a minor; but Mr. Laffiter was fo ftubborn in his demands, that he was utterly *impracticable*.

Each was ruined if they did not agree ; a consideration that was an admirable hint in their friendship. The lawyer talked high—the lady hesitated.

“ I have one other proposition to make,” said Laffiter.

“ What is it ?” said Lady Jemima, eagerly.

It was—and well did Laffiter evince his knowledge of the world, when he made it to Lady Jemima Byram : it was no other than a proposal of marriage to be had and holden between themselves, by which their interests would be cemented, all dispute about division would be ended, and their happiness insured.

There was in Laffiter’s person and manner that which too often inclines the less-endued part of mankind to suppose themselves conquered when they are only bullied.

lied. Her Ladyship, it is true, was *absolutely shocked*—sure Mr. Lassiter forgot either who *he was*, or *she had been*. Did he not know her for the daughter of one Earl, and the sister of another? Could he imagine she would condescend to give her hand to a country attorney? All this was invincibly strong argument, but the discussion, of two hours duration, annihilated it, and a secret treaty of alliance between the belligerent powers concluded eternal peace. The scruples that remained on her Ladyship's delicacy being entirely removed by Mr. Lassiter's positive assurance, that, by what means he did not care to explain, he should in a few months find himself in a situation to brave the best man in the country, and to *support* as well as to *purchase* the distinction of a title.

Lady Jemima's next care was to write to her daughter Arabella, at the school in Dublin, where she had left her. Lassiter found a messenger, one of his own

clerks, to go on the errand, and strong was his temptation to give the fellow a sum of money to run away with Miss Arabella, and by marrying her to ruin her hopes from Sir Clifford ; but as there was a chance that the old gentleman might in his infatuation forgive even this, or that Lady Jemima might have address enough to find it out, and betray him, he suffered things to take their natural course for once, and Arabella was earnestly conjured to return immediately to her mother, on business of singular urgency and importance.

The school to which Arabella had been sent, was, as œconomy dictated, far from a *first rate* ; and the young lady was very soon reconciled to her removal, by finding there was much less compulsion to diligence, and much more liberty of action than had been described to her, as the lot of boarding-school misses. There were but two circumstances she felt inclined to complain

complain of: the one was confinement to the house; the other was a limited appetite: for the first of these grievances she found some consolation in *friendship*; for the other there appeared at present no remedy.

The *friendship* she had formed was with a scholar a year older than herself, but far more *aged* in experience of the world. She originated from London; and notwithstanding the contradiction of an Irish education, she talked largely of her family opulence and importance; and her parents having an humble connection with a great house, in the nursery of which she had been permitted to pass part of her infancy, she talked fluently of Lord Robert, Lady Anne, and Lady Frances; and prudently suppressing all circumstances of degradation, she charmed Miss Arabella's heart, and made her think herself at home again.

This

This fair seducer had a brother, born with no better hopes than that of being at the next vacancy elected valet where his father reigned as butler, and his mother triumphed as housekeeper. Having finished his education, he had been sent over to Ireland on a visit of prudence and forecast to his grandfather, a small dealer in whiskey; and *fraternal affection* prompting him to bestow much notice on his sister and her friends, he took some pains to introduce himself amongst them; which, as he possessed a very good person, and could admirably adopt the manner, *as well as clothes*, of his superiors, was no difficult matter, where a lax government was the only impediment.

Soon learning who Miss Byram was, and how much credit her condescending friendship reflected on his sister, he concluded his fortune made if he could gain her attention; and this was no difficulty where he had occasional access, and while,
in

in his absence, his virtues and pretensions were incessantly the theme of conversation. In short, Arabella saw in his attachment the means of escaping from the only inconveniencies she endured; and he and his sister, not supposing the young lady's situation could be that of indigence, cherished their good fortune as certain happiness.

Every thing was in train for an elopement; and a day but one week distant was appointed for the happy purpose, when Lady Jemima's messenger arrived, and the governess of the school, not willingly, prepared to give up her charge; but the bride elect was refractory—her dear Charles's scheme must be demolished if she departed, and she had no means of informing him. Her governess, supposing her absence might be more than temporary, and therefore injurious to her interests, forbore to urge the matter, when the young lady, expressing her fears of cross-
sing

sing the sea at so bad a season of the year, begged her voyage might be postponed for a few months. In one letter she wrote her apprehensions, in another (given secretly to the messenger) she more openly disclosed her prospects, in this language, with which the inspiration of her passion, and the conversation of her friend, had furnished her:

“ WILL my dearest mother forgive, will she feel for her unhappy daughter, who, shackled in the silver net of love, feels all its arrows drinking at her bleeding heart? Ah, madam! you have known what it is to love; but never, never can you have drank the soft waters of enthusiastic passion to the degree of inebriating intoxication that has wounded your too-greatly blessed daughter. The attractions of my mind and person have animated some time since, with the purest flame, the sentiments of a young gentleman, whose angelic sister is my very self. He,
 though

though gracing a sphere of life in an orbit far superior to my lowly lot, condescends with sweet affability to declare his felicity on this blessed earth to be centered only in your daughter; but the dread of offending his relations, who are bent on marrying him to a young lady of distinguished beauty and great fortune, obliges him to confine his passion to the chaste abode of his divine thoughts: we therefore, my dearest mother, breathe our mutual vows in secret, till that happy day arrives—and sure arrive it will at last! though my longing eyes look yet for it in vain, when Hymen, in his purple robe, spotted with yellow, and with saffron torch, shall join our sympathetic hearts by uniting our hands. This day, this fatal day, when the gordian knot of love shall fasten me to wedlock and happiness sublime, will be past, my adored mother, before this kisses your hands; and I shall have the felicity of presenting to you, in filken bonds, the glorious victim love has

con-

consecrated to mutual felicity. Instantly as we are one, we shall fly to your feet, and implore a blessing on our holy vows. If you remember what it is to love, you will, I am sure, forgive this delay, and still allow me to subscribe myself, till death, —O ! 'tis the last time, perhaps, I shall sign my virgin name as

Your most dutiful and affectionate

A. BYRAM."

Lady Jemima had, with no other alleviation of her solitude than Mr. Lassiter's wooing visits, waited impatiently the return of this second embassy ; and great was her mortification to receive, instead of Miss Arabella, such a mess of nonsense as her metaphorical rhapsody. She muttered to herself *shackles—arrows—waters—orbit—vows—Hymen—purple spotted with yellow—saffron torch—wedlock—glorious victim* ; and then fully convinced that, however Arabella's heart was fitted for intrigue, her head was not to be relied on,

on, she tost the letter with contempt into the fire, and felt at sea again.

Laffiter's clerk had been so expeditious, that only ten days of the fortnight were expired, and Lady Jemima began, before she could summon her privy counsellor, to deliberate on her next manoeuvre. Her ill success, though it distressed, did not discourage her; her spirit rose under oppression, and her only difficulty was to find some usurper to set up. She could contemplate with philosophic temper the circumstances of her two daughters; one was, she concluded, dead; the other, perhaps, was ruined; for the experienced matron had little faith in Hymen's purple and yellow; but the greatest of all misery was, that she had not the means of imposing on Sir Clifford; and without that, she considered it as impossible to cheat him.

In the distraction of her mind, the *true* Elizabeth occurred to her remembrance;
and

and with all the sincerity of defeated project, she repented her having exiled her. Her deprivation of all other hope made her almost confident, that from Elizabeth's native generosity she might have expected greater advantage than from the deception of her own daughter. She saw in an instant, that the plain path would have been the shortest and the safest; and for the first time in her life her reason reflected her to herself in the image of a fool.

Was it too late yet to repair her error? was the question next prompted by the exigency of her distress. No; she thought one effort might save her, could she but find a third messenger. It was possible Mrs. Haccombe might not have sent Elizabeth to the Indies; the young woman's particular aversion to the scheme might have defeated it: there was just a probability that she might be in England: a query to Mrs. Haccombe would at least ascertain it, and on this she resolved; but

no

no other mode of conveyance than the post presenting itself, she was forced to make use of that, and wait a return.

Laffiter, alarmed by his messenger's report, flew instantly to Coventry : his coadjutor was compelled to tell him of the new plan she had adopted : he condemned it as desperate, though he was convinced there might be a chance not thought on before, because not fully revealed to him, of finding Miss Elizabeth, whose coming he instantly perceived would be ruin to him. He saw that Lady Jemima and Elizabeth would join forces ; and even should he, by investigating his suspicions respecting the newly-married Lady Armathwaite, place all parties accidentally in their rightful situations, still there would no other advantage redound to himself than that of throwing out Lady Jemima ; for of the pleasure of doing justice, it cannot be supposed Mr. Laffiter could have any idea.

He

He paced the apartment in great commotion, more than half inclined to vent his anger against Lady Jemima for her precipitancy; but prudence restrained his temper, and he saw it would be wiser to secure her fidelity by pacific measures: he, therefore, with implied threats, but gentle language, urged her Ladyship's immediately fulfilling the matrimonial promise she had given him; and she, hampered on all sides, and uncertain of all things, but her danger, found it most for her advantage to acquiesce.

It was of the utmost importance that the wedding, whenever it took place, should be secret; and the great Mr. Laffiter could not flatter himself, that any act of his done in the county of his residence, or in those adjoining to it, could be unnoticed. A journey to London was the best expedient. It was instantly put in practice; and in three days the parties returned to their respective abodes, separated by

by their unfathomable prudence, but forever conjoined by the bonds of matrimony.

On her return, the still-anxious bride found a letter from Mrs. Haccombe, briefly informing her, that after a series of *the most abandoned conduct*, Miss Lamorne had run away from the ship that should have carried her out, and had since that time been harboured by the Countess of Cottisbrooke.

Lady Jemima, though never admitted into the circles of Lady Cottisbrooke, knew enough of her character to be persuaded that, unless grossly deceived, she could not harbour persons of *abandoned conduct*; nor could she, though inclined to depreciate, so far delude herself as to believe Elizabeth's conduct could deserve the odious epithet of abandoned. Her morality, however, was entirely out of the question in the present case; and she accordingly, but again without consulting Lassiter, wrote to *Miss Lamorne, at the Countess of Cottisbrooke's, London.*

CHAP. V.

THE kindness of the Blyford family, and the cordial regret Lady Cottisbrooke had expressed at parting, afforded Peregrina every hope and consolation, that could aid her reason in reconciling her to the exile her prudence had suggested; and in a few days, having received a very kind and satisfactory letter from the Countess, she ceased to feel anxious for Hamilton's constancy. Considering the generous offer made her by the incomparable Ami Bonange, as an appeal to her sincerity, she aimed at the investigation of her own heart and its propensities; and feeling that she could really rest contented and be *comparatively* happy, provided she were assured of the welfare of her noble friends

friends at Margate, and being more than half persuaded that she could, without regret, hear that Captain Courtland had married to the satisfaction of his mother and family, she had ingenuouſness enough to confeſs to herſelf, that this placid diſpoſition was nearer of kin to friendſhip than to love, and was therefore convinced, ſhe had no title to the proffered generoſity of her incognito guardian : ſhe therefore, at her firſt leiſure, wrote from Frandiſton Park to Ami, acknowledging, with the utmoſt gratitude, his unmerited goodneſs ; but declining all right to it, as neceſſary to her peace.

Her ſituation with her new friends was ſuch as took away all regret for the cauſe, and afforded her a pleaſure, almoſt novel, that of purſuing, with every encouragement, her favourite occupations. Mrs. Blyford, delighted with her accompliſhments, and the diffidence which accompanied them, had no greater pleaſure than

in furthering her progress; and the elder young ladies, whose religious restrictions had prevented their entering the world in pursuit of its elegances, were happy to profit by her attainments. Their apartment was therefore, till dinner-time, a species of academy; and their evenings were spent either in visits in the neighbourhood, with company at home, or in a domestic circle where conversation never flagged, because it was never forced; where every one was at liberty to follow their own pursuit, to request information, or to communicate knowledge.

Martha Blyford, the eldest of these amiable girls, was simplicity itself, as far as simplicity consists with good sense and the most guarded conduct, wherever that conduct was liable to censure. In her gay moments, for though a Quaker she was gay, no heart could wear less disguise—none ever needed it less; and having not yet been deceived, she knew not that any
 one

one could attempt deceiving her. She had never experienced so great a pleasure as that of Peregrina's company; she was assiduous to deserve her friendship; and could indeed must have been that heart which could deny admission to such an affection as Martha Blyford's.

Her person was lovely, her countenance ingenuous; her features were animated, and a most faithful index to her mind. It was from them that Peregrina, in less than a fortnight, learnt that Martha was not quite the happy girl she strove to appear. She dared not inquire, but she was hurt to see every day increasing testimonials of sorrow, and, she feared, of rapidly declining health, in her aspect.

It was impossible, by general expressions of concern, or the most minute as well as affectionate queries, to obtain from her any satisfaction: she was grateful for Miss Lammorne's attention—she smiled, and assured

her her looks were not to be relied on, if they did not bespeak her well and happy.

Peregrina would have persuaded herself, that her own anxiety misled her ; but Mrs. Blyford grew alarmed at Martha's evidently-forced cheerfulness. Peregrina endeavoured to allay her fears, and at the same time set herself more earnestly to obtain the young lady's confidence. But all her endeavours were fruitless, till one morning, when the cheering influence of an autumn sun having invited them to stroll together to the neighbouring village, in their return home, they took the path over the churchyard, where Martha's keen sight was caught by a stone newly erected to the memory of a young woman of the parish, who was said to have died of a lingering illness at the age of eighteen. She read the simple biography with interest and energy, and then said, as to herself, " I am not eighteen yet."

" I am

“ I am sorry to hear you make that observation,” said her companion, who had narrowly watched her. “ What resemblance can there be between your situation and that of this young person ?”

“ O none—but why do thee ask ?”

“ Because, my dear Martha, you seemed to think of *yourself* when you read the inscription.”

“ I never hear of a young person’s dying of a lingering illness, without thinking of myself.”

“ Are you apprehensive it will be your lot ?”

“ I do not know ; but, dear Peregrina, I was acquainted with that young woman ; she was not of our society, but thee never knew a better creature—she lost her life by nursing some sick relations, who reco-

vered only by her care, and my mother's goodness."

" Well, but, my dear, why then should you particularly compare her uncommon fate with your situation?—she was singularly; unfortunate. '

" No, no, Peregrina, not unfortunate, but very, very happy—she must, I am sure, be happy; something within me tells me so; and I am certain she must have gone to all those she loved, and that loved her. It was a happiness for *her* to die!"

" And is it not for all?"

" No, no, thee cannot think so, I am sure."

" For all but the wicked, I mean."

" Yes; but there may be people *not wicked*, who yet have cause to fear punishment, for being weak and obstinate."

" That

“ That cannot be your case, my dear Martha.”

“ O yes ; thee can have no acquaintance with me yet—thou would hate me. I am weak and obstinate—I wish for what cannot be—I am discontented, and very weak, nay almost wicked.”

“ Why, what do you wish for ?—Let me judge how far it is unreasonable.”

“ Why, now, dearest Peregrina—pray never tell—I wish I was not a Quaker.”

“ Well, that is no very great sin ; if your wish arises from reflection and from conscience, why do you not communicate it to Mr. Blyford ? no one can be more liberal in religious opinions.”

“ No, no—it is not conscience, indeed. Can it be conscience that makes me discontented, when I have every thing this

world can give me?—I have the kindest parents possible; I love my brothers and sisters; I have thee for my friend; and yet I am so discontented, that I am certain if I pass this winter as I have passed the autumn, I shall never see the spring; and is not that unpardonable folly? If I could but get over this—if I could but break my stubborn spirit, I should have no more fear of dying than that young woman.”

“ But what hinders your overcoming this discontented disposition? Do you use your endeavours?”

“ Indeed I do—I do assure thee I have not looked at it once since I came home.”

“ Looked at what?”

“ O, Peregrina Lamorne, ask me nothing further! thee sees how little I have the command of myself. Pity me, if thee
can;

can ; I die if thee blame me, and yet thee must blame me."

The tears gushed from Martha's eyes ; and Peregrina forbore all farther inquiry, contenting herself, in their way home, with endeavours to re-assure her companion, and indulging her own guesses.

Her friendly consolations were not lost ; for though Martha would then disclose no more, she invited her friend to meet her in the dusk of the evening, in her own apartment, and promised there to tell her griefs.

Peregrina was at a loss to decide on what course she should take to ease Mrs. Blyford's hourly-increasing anxiety. She was almost tempted to give her notice of the time when the important secret was to be revealed ; but as their religious peculiarities were included in poor Martha's difficulties, she feared hazarding for her the

favour of her parents, in an attempt to serve her ; she, therefore, trusted to what she should be able to do for her, when fully informed of her distresses ; and attended punctually at the hour appointed, to hear them ; but as she was making her way to Miss Blyford's apartments, she met her maid, with an excuse from her, that having a bad head-ache she could not indulge herself with her company.

But Peregrina was too sincerely actuated by a desire to render her service, to attend to an excuse, which she knew originated only in Martha's reluctance to unbosom herself. She ventured circumspectly into her room, and found her in the deepest dejection, which was interrupted only by tears and reproaches on her own folly.

“ I cannot bear to see you thus,” said Peregrina ; “ you call me your friend, my Martha, and you treat me like your greatest enemy. Unless you will perform your promise

mise to me, without reserve, I must discharge my duty to Mr. and Mrs. Blyford, by telling them what you this morning told me."

"Thee would not, I am certain," she replied, with tolerable composure. "I have thought of my folly, in indulging this spirit of discontent, and of my greater folly in revealing it. Were I to perform my promise to thee, Peregrina, I know thee would tell my father and mother, in hopes to make me happy; for thee art an angel of goodness: but I should then hate myself, even if they could and would do every thing possible for me. I should despise myself for being so childish. Pray, then, release me from my promise; it was a rash one; and on my part I promise thee to strive to live and be content: and if thee does not own, in a few days, that I am better, then I will tell thee all, and thee shall hate me."

Peregrina, though she reluctantly gave up her hope of hearing Martha's sorrows, and of contributing to her relief, could not but admire the greatness of her mind; and finding it impossible to shake her resolution, she took the opposite method of encouraging her exertions to regain her peace, and hoped they would not prove ineffectual.

CHAP. VI.

COULD any thing have divested Peregrina's heart of its socialsy mpathies, and centered its concerns in herself, it would have been the following letter which she received the next day :

“ I HAVE done, I hope, my duty ; I have risked my heart's best interest. Surely more cannot be required of me.

“ You assure me, my Peregrina, and who can doubt language so sincere ? that gratitude and friendship are the predominant sentiments you feel for Courtland ; you say that were worldly considerations to induce you to listen to his passion, you should still feel hurt at the disparity of your situations.

situations. Perhaps this is carrying the point of delicacy a little too far. I shall only understand you, as meaning by it, that your reason is unclouded by the prejudices of love.

“ The greatest pleasure I ever experienced was conveyed to me in that part of your ingenuous letter, which rests a large share of your regard for Courtland on the temporary supposition, that he and Ami Bonange were the same person. May an equal degree of ingenuousness, on my part, be but half as acceptable to you !

“ As yet you must know me only as your good genius ; a farther communication depends solely on yourself. But suppose me not, I beseech you, a being of another world, or one who penetrates mysteries or sees futurities. Love has been my motive, accident has been my friend ; my aim is to shield from the malice and misfortunes of the world, heaven’s best gift

gift to man ; and should I succeed in obtaining possession of your heart, I will die to prove my title to it.

“ How can I recommend myself, thus veiled ? how little likely am I to recommend myself, when I shall unveil ! I would not have your reason or judgment my enemy, yet their suffrage would not content me ; by their decrees, however, I must abide ; for to them only can I appeal.

“ The small services I have hitherto been able to render you, can convince you of nothing more than my regard for you ; and this regard may be stripped of all merit by being selfish. I may have saved you from others, to secure you to myself. Perhaps I have been less disinterested than I ought to have been—I have no means of proving the contrary.

“ What situation of life would content you, I can judge only from my general know-

knowledge of your opinions; whether mine would meet your wishes is as doubtful; but you have an option, and may exercise it without endangering my friendship for you.

“ I can promise you little of the gewgaw of life; but its solid comforts are within my power. I make no preposterous proposition—I offer you no *pastoral* felicities, no Arcadian delights—a home, where love shall ever welcome you, peace shall soothe you, and friendship shall protect you, is, next to an honest heart, my best possession. The cares of life, if they cannot be repelled, shall be lessened by participation. We will live to the satisfaction of virtuous minds, and strive to merit the favour of heaven. Our superfluities shall bless the needy; our example shall encourage morality; and, while we despise not the elegancies of life, we will remain untainted by its luxuries.

“ Such

“ Such are my views; could you but adopt them! You alone are formed to aid them—they vanish if you oppose them.

“ It would be presumption; nay, it would be to suppose a deficiency of self regard, were I to conclude you so wholly uninfluenced by the judgment of the world, as to be indifferent to the external circumstances of the man you give your hand to. Seven years in the difference of our ages—in person, I believe I rank with those which “ nature makes by thousands, and sets no mark upon them.” Could I flatter myself I had made any impression on your memory, I should refer you for the origin of our acquaintance, to a day, nearly two years ago, when, in company with three other gentlemen, I met Mr. Byram and yourself on horseback, about two miles from the place you then resided at. One of my friends stopped to speak to Mr. Byram—I gazed on you, but you did not perceive it; and as I was on my way to quit
the

the country, I could get no access to you. Must I *call* it chance that has again placed you within my reach? No, rather call it Providence, and dispose yourself to fulfill its decrees.

“ Is this presuming too far on your goodness? Will you think it excused by your condescension in saying, that even did your heart plead for Courtland, you must hesitate before you relinquished the tutelar friendship of

“ Your most devoted,

“ AMI BONANGE.”

No one of the vicissitudes of Peregrina's life had produced on her such a distraction of mind, as the unexpected avowal of this letter. It called her, as it were, to a new state of being; she could no longer ask herself, where should *she* find friends? when Providence, from so trivial an event, an event which had scarcely left any trace
upon

upon her memory, had raised her up so powerful and so inestimable a friend and protector, whose vigilance she had always felt as a supreme obligation, and whose attachment she was too grateful to disregard; but, still reflecting on the mystery in which he clouded himself, and on the advantage her acquiescence in it gave him, she could not think of accepting implicitly a proposal, the merit of which could be judged of only by the event.

A postscript to the letter requested a speedy answer, addressed to a coffee-house near Westminster bridge; and thither, by the return of the post, she sent this brief answer:

“ Let me intreat you to disclose yourself, if you wish for any thing farther than the respect and gratitude of

“ Your eternally obliged

“ P. L.”

CHAR.

CHAP. VII.

SEVERAL days of extreme disquietude succeeded to the pleasure Ami's letter had given Peregrina; and, to save herself from the shock of disappointment she expected would be her lot, she endeavoured to anticipate it, and to divert her thoughts by attention to lovely Martha Blyford, who really seemed to have profited by the dilemma she had reduced herself to. The family were still kind to their guest—Lady Cottisbrooke, who was removed to town, wrote frequently and cordially. Lady Almerina was quite an altered being, grateful to Peregrina, and respectful to Lady Cottisbrooke. The Earl was disposed to think lightly of her defeated elopement. Hamilton's embarkation was countermanded,

manded, and he was in high spirits, flirting with every lady who came in his way. In short, could Peregrina have heard news of the two friends she had met at Margate, Mr. Halnaby and Mrs. *Birram*, the comfort of her friends would, in some measure, have counterbalanced her private uneasiness.

At length, after long waiting, which had scarcely at all diminished her anxiety, she received another letter from Ami Bonange; but it was brief, and without noticing her request, as mysterious as ever—it told her only, that Lady Jemima Byram was in quest of her, and advised her, as she valued her safety or reputation, to be on her guard, and to pay no heed to any art she might use to seduce her from her friends.

This, though mortifying, was important. She had by the next post but two, a letter from Lady Cottisbrooke, inclosing one from Lady Jemima. It contained a
very

very kind and very earnest request to her immediately to meet her at Coventry, on business of the utmost importance to her, the purport of which, she had not then time to explain ; but Peregrina was rendered, though indeed now *unjustly*, suspicious, and she returned no answer.

Ami Bonange wrote soon again on the subject of his more interesting letter, lamenting the necessity he was under of remaining a short time longer *in enigma*; and in language otherwise unreserved, evincing the most honourable attachment to the object of his care, who far from being insensible to his professions, began to grow extremely pensive without feeling melancholy, and to think that in the delight of being sincerely beloved by one whose merit warranted a return from her, she should find an abundant compensation for all the ills she had endured.

Her

Her musing disposition was remarked, but not avowedly by any, except Martha Blyford, who seemed almost to wish Peregrina so far on equal terms with her as to wear an oppressed heart. This certainly appeared necessary to her confidence in her ; and to gain the cause of Peregrina's dejection, she so far revealed her own, as to discover that it originated in the attentions of one of the other sex, with whom she had formed an intimacy while on a visit to some friends the preceding winter. Disposed as Martha was to exculpate the young man, and charge herself with credulity and presumption, his conduct appeared reprehensible : he had been much at the house she was at ; he had improved every opportunity of conciliating her regard ; and even if it could be supposed that a simple girl had taken nonsense for sincerity, still he could not be wholly acquitted of an intention to mislead her ; for he had talked away all the obstacles their religious disparity presented, and had solemnly

solemnly assured her of his design to make a personal application to her father, on the strength of which she had accepted his picture.

It appeared that on her return home he had discontinued every attention, and by his conduct shewn he thought no more of her ; and she, considering herself rather than him to blame, in having encouraged him, had forborne every complaint, and was, though unequal to the struggle, disposed to submit. Who this capricious lover was, where she had met with him, or what had been his fate, Miss Blyford would on no persuasions disclose ; - nor would she shew the picture, though Peregrina observed there was little danger of discovery, in so far gratifying her curiosity, as to shew what features and complexion had pleased her.

She seemed relieved by thus far disburthening her heart, though she failed in
pre-

prevailing on her friend to be equally communicative ; and Peregrina saw it was in vain to exert herself for the injured girl, as the opposition would be stronger from her lover than from her parents. But she at every opportunity watched for some new circumstance of her sorrows from the lips of the sufferer ; and at last having learnt as an argument for her submission, that the prospect of her happiness was still farther opposed than by the young man's being of the Church of England, by disparity of situation, and above all by his being a soldier ! she saw no hope for poor Martha, who frequently suggested as an excuse for the volatility that had poisoned her peace, the circumstance of her being a Quaker.

From Mrs. Blyford, Peregrina learnt that it was at Norwich that her daughter had passed the winter ; and the suspicion this, and her knowledge of some previous circumstances excited, was soon after confirmed by Martha's want of caution in

telling Peregrina that *she* was no stranger to the person of her lover. “Then,” replied her friend, “you can keep me in ignorance no longer—it is—it can be only Captain Courtland, and from my heart I pity you.”

The guess was right, and Martha seeing it impossible to retract, in silence and tears permitted Peregrina to urge every topic of consolation that her affection and ingenuity suggested. To encourage her was to deceive her, for Hamilton had but too plainly shewn the instability, if not the coquetry of his amours. As it might have occasioned the sweet girl still greater pain to know that in her confidante she had had a rival, she forbore mentioning Courtland’s conduct towards herself, and confined her endeavours to the arming Martha’s pride against her passion.

But, as soon as she was at liberty, she wrote to Lady Cottisbrooke, whom she knew
 she

she could trust, a full account of the mischief Hamilton had occasioned, and its probable consequences. She expatiated on the uncommon prudence of Miss Blyford, who, while at Margate, where Captain Courtland occasionally met her, had never betrayed her feelings; and she could not, though she knew his mother's partiality, forbear animadverting on his caprice and insensibility.

The month of November was far advanced when she wrote on this subject to Lady Cottisbrooke; and she was impatiently waiting in secret an answer, endeavouring to cheer drooping Martha by every assiduity of friendship, when the poor girl's heart was afresh wounded by the necessity of parting with the servant who had brought her up, and whose age and infirmities made it necessary that she should be discharged from all labor. The woman having expressed a wish to retire to her own country and friends, a succes-

for had been sought, and one very well recommended, as a widow who had lived well, and suffered by misfortunes, was hired by a friend of Mrs. Blyford for her ; and now to the no small discomfort of the Miss Blyfords, who could like nobody after old Margaret, she came to her place, three days service in which convinced the family that she had but small pretensions to the excellent character given of her ; for she was, to the last degree, presuming and intruding, qualities which, in spite of the levelling doctrines of Quakerism, few Quakers are inclined to applaud.

It was part of her business to attend Miss Lamorne, and considering her as perhaps of a rank little superior to her own, she was never backward to assist her with her advice and observations. This Peregrina bore with patience and good humour ; but Miss Blyford, prejudiced against her, could not endure it.

She was often secretly offended at her critiques on her works, her drawings, &c. and nothing induced her to tolerate it, but Peregrina's reminding her that the woman had been unfortunate. Believing that the ignorant creature meant well, she endeavoured to learn from her so much of her story as might, when again related, interest Miss Blyford for her; but here Sarah's pride opposed the good intention, and she would reveal nothing.

Miss Blyford, being permitted by her parents to vary her employments by any elegant pursuit, was very desirous of painting miniatures, and to facilitate her progress, which was more than equal to the instruction she had had, Peregrina offered to lend her the miniature of her mother, which she had received from Mr. Byram on his death-bed. The ivory oval was duly formed, and the friends were deeply engaged in the business of fixing eyes, nose, and mouth, when Sarah coming

F 3
into

into the room, could not restrain her curiosity, but with expressions of vulgar admiration came up to the table, and taking up the miniature, which was to be copied, she cried out, “ Good Lord ! why, I am sure this is Joan.”

“ *Joan !*” repeated Miss Blyford, somewhat stiffly, “ I wish, Sarah, thee would learn a little more caution in speaking. Thee may fancy this like some friend, but thee must be mistaken ; for this is friend Lammorne’s mother.”

“ What is it you mean, Sarah ?” said Peregrina, “ sure you did not know my mother !”

“ No, Ma’am, I did not say I knowed your mother ; only that picture, I am sure, and I could swear to, is Joan ; it was drawed, I am *potifive*, when she lived with us.”

“ For

“ For heaven’s sake, who is Joan ?” answered Peregrina ; “ you keep me on the rack, Sarah.”

“ Rack or unrack,” retorted Sarah saucily, “ I could swear it to be Joan ; why, it is the very moral of her.”

“ But only tell us who thee means by Joan,” said Miss Blyford mildly ; “ we know nothing of Joan. Did thee say she lived with thee ?”

“ What, Miss, I suppose you want to *penerate* into my family secrets ; but though I am poor now, I am a gentlewoman born and bred ; and I sha’n’t set myself up to be a laughing-stock for you, nor nobody.”

She then flounced out of the room, and Miss Blyford, seeing Peregrina’s agitation, though she knew not the cause, immediately went to her mother to com-

plain of Sarah's rudeness, while she who it most affected, could scarcely be restrained from following the maid, and begging a farther explanation.

Mrs. Blyford returned almost immediately with her daughter, and began to apologise to her guest for the presumption of her servant ; but Peregrina assuring her friends that she was far from feeling it as an affront, and that it might assist her in discovering a parent she had never had the felicity of knowing, Mrs. Blyford, without farther inquiry, cheerfully ordered Sarah to be called, and by gentle words strove to smooth the harshness of her resentment for the indignity she conceived offered her by the young ladies.

Nothing less than a bribe could stop the inundating eloquence of her anger ; but once appeased, she with much preface, and words of great import as to her *aboriginal* grandeur, was proceeding to say,
that

that her father's name was Rufford, and that he was a clergyman in Berkshire;—when Peregrina recollecting that as the name her father in his dying moments had mentioned, dropped on her knees before the homely oracle, and with scarcely breath to articulate her wishes, besought her to tell her in a moment all she knew of her mother.

“ Let me take Sarah into another room, my dear,” said Mrs. Blyford, tenderly seating and supporting her in her chair.

“ O no,” said Peregrina, “ let me hear directly who was the Joan she speaks of?”

“ Why, Joan was Joan ; that's all I know of the matter,” answered Sarah huffingly—“ Mercy on me, what am I to be *terrogated* just for all the world as if I was before a *jus pece* ?”

“ No, no, good Sarah,” said Peregrina,
“ only tell me what was my mother’s
name.”

“ Why Joan, to be sure.”

“ But her surname ?”

“ Doveridge — Joanna Doveridge she
was christened, I believe.”

“ And who did she marry ?” said Mrs.
Blyford.”

“ Why, I did not say she married any
body.

“ Ah !” sighed Peregrina, “ so I feared.
You say she lived with you—as a servant,
I suppose.”

“ No, not quite so *menial* as a servant ;
but she had very little money ; she had but
one thousand pounds, and I had three ;
and

and she was as clumsy a creature as ever you set your eyes on, and so proud—mercy on me ! I used to think, Well, Miss, if all poor lords' daughters are so proud, I wish they may all go to the—old gentleman !”

“ A lord's daughter !” reiterated Peregrina ; “ Who is it then you talk of Sarah ? *my* mother could be no lord's daughter.”

“ I don't know, Miss, who *your* mother might be ; but *mine* was a gentlewoman, and never demeaned by *loping* with fellows, like Joan.”

“ Go, go away, Sarah,” said Mrs. Blyford ; “ either answer properly such questions as thee is asked, or thee shall be dismissed from my service.”

It was now become impossible to get a word of farther information from the en-

raged misconception of one who, never
 either a reasonable or a benevolent being,
 was confused by her suspicions, and ex-
 asperated by her ill success in the world ;
 for Miss Rufford, soon after the death of
 her father, had completed the climax of
 her folly, by bestowing herself and her
 three thousand pounds upon a man whom
 she knew only by his own report, and had
 become acquainted with in a stage-coach.
 His conjugal attentions had lasted no
 longer than from the early hour of wed-
 lock till the close of the evening, in which
 time he had had address enough to secure
 the whole of her property, even to her
 wardrobe ; and having performed this im-
 portant matter, he left the bride with her
 mother and retired to his native city,
 York, to share the fruit of his industry
 with a wife to whom similitude of talents
 and disposition had for some years kept
 him faithful. Miss Rufford, then styling
 herself Mrs. Earle, betook herself in dudgeon
 to her helpless mother, who allowed her
 to

to participate the scanty pittance the interest of her friends had raised for her ; and the old lady, having lived til within a few months of this time, it was but now that the daughter had found it necessary to shift for herself. A friend of Mrs. Blyford's, who knew and compassionated the helpless patience of the mother, had endeavoured to ease her anxiety on her death-bed, by promising she would not neglect her daughter ; and in her regard for the deceased, she carried her friendship for the living to an excess of injustice, by vouching for her merits beyond what her experience warranted ; and thus Miss Rufford, who with much difficulty could brook the idea of servitude, was placed in a situation which, had her wits increased with her misfortunes, might have averted the consequences of her unpardonable indiscretion.

But a temper so unmanageable could be curbed only by fear ; and relying wholly

wholly on the friendship that had placed her thus happily, she forgot that her own endeavours were necessary to the maintaining her post ; and whatever change in her name and condition this foolish woman had experienced, or might experience, she was and she would be Miss Rufford still. Her restive temper rendered the little she had communicated to Peregrina only agonizing ; and she appeared too much delighted with the power of tormenting to be prevailed on to relinquish it. Mrs. Blyford dismissed her from her presence, and then attempted to calm the excessive perturbation of her young friend, by assuring her, that on Mr. Blyford's return home, which would be in a couple of hours, some means should be found to overcome the obstinacy of Sarah.

CHAP. VIII.

It was now become almost necessary, that Mrs. Blyford should be entrusted with more of Peregrina's history than any of her former friends had known ; and where she had met with such kindness, and saw such respect paid to moral integrity, she had little to oppose her confidence. Neither Mrs. Blyford nor Martha, interested as they appeared for *friend Lamorne*, indulged the least degree of curiosity after Sarah was dismissed. Peregrina sat weeping ; and her sorrow was interrupted only by their kind and judicious efforts to soothe its agitations. In broken accents, and with tears that could not be suppressed, she thanked them for their goodness, and said :

“ It

“It is fit, my dear ladies, that you should know something more of my situation ; it would be an unhappy one, were it not for the extraordinary friendship I have met with ; and I could never have troubled any one with my misfortunes—”

“Do not call it *troubling*,” interrupted Martha, in a convulsed voice, “I knew thee was unhappy, but I dared not ever ask thee.”

“Do not, I pray thee, my love,” Mrs. Blyford interposed, “imagine that we would take advantage of this accident to indulge our curiosity. Thee shall talk to Sarah alone, perhaps thee can persuade her.”

“My dear Madam,” answered Peregrina, “you are indeed very indulgent ; but it will be pleasing to me to think such friends know me for what I am. Sarah talks of my mother, if it be my mother,
in

in terms that I can derive no credit from. I fear, from what she says of her rank in life, that she must have erred voluntarily, and then why should I wish to know more of her?"

Mrs. Blyford advised her to draw no conclusion till she had farther information; and Peregrina, a little encouraged, proceeded:

"When I first remember myself, I lived at Mr. Byram's seat at Balla-craig, in the north of Ireland—

"*Byram?*" said Mrs. Blyford; "Was the Mrs. Byram who was at Margate any relative of his?"

"I believe not; I understand her name was *Byron*, for she was generally called *Birron*."

"I interrupted thee; go on."

"Mr.

“ Mr. Byram and his wife, Lady Jemima, and their two children, were frequently at Balla-craig, and Mr. Byram always called me his child, and treated me as such. I remember inquiring of my nurse why I had not a mama as well as the Miss Byrams; and she told me my mama was a naughty woman, and gone to the *pit-hole*. My curiosity was not satisfied; and when I was about seven years old, I remember asking Mr. Byram who was my mama? I have a perfect recollection of his taking me in his arms, and saying with great emotion, ‘ You have no mama, my love; but I will be papa and mama to you.’ I then used to interrogate my governess, who, I really believe, could give me no insight into the mystery: she conjectured that my mother had either treated Mr. Byram perfidiously, or was dead; but advised me rather to rest satisfied in ignorance than to hazard Mr. Byram’s favour, or depress his spirits by my inquiries. I obeyed her; for I revered her opinion,

and

and was convinced of her prudence. I endeavoured to be content with the kindness I experienced from Mr. Byram, which nothing could exceed; and as I had all my life been impressed with the idea that I existed only by sufferance, I was little disposed to competition with the Miss Byrams, or to complain of the confinement I lived in. I was happy till I was sixteen, when my excellent governess died, and I was overwhelmed with grief; yet even then I felt with double force what I owed to Mr. Byram's goodness, which increased towards me on that event; but soon after, his health declined, and—the recollection of it is agony to my mind—he died—but died acknowledging me for his daughter; and with an intention, I have ever thought, of revealing to me who was my other parent. He did not say she was dead; he gave me that picture which Miss Blyford was going to copy, and said to me, (for I never shall forget his words) *If any doubt ever arises respecting your birth,*
look

look at that picture—he could articulate no more. I *have* looked thousands of times at the picture, but it cannot satisfy my doubts; and I can conclude only that I am very much like my mother, and that he thought the sight of that picture would ascertain my being her daughter.”

“ Thee is not like the picture,” said Mrs. Blyford, taking it up and intently comparing it.

“ But why did thee leave Ireland ?” said Martha, a little curious.

“ It was necessary I should seek my living; for Mr. Byram leaving no will, I had nothing.”

“ What ! did he leave thee nothing ?—nothing to his daughter ?” repeated Martha indignantly.

“ I scarcely know who I am,” answered Peregrina with a sigh; “ for strange
as

as it may seem, after all Mr. Byram's parental affection towards me, I am confidently assured that to one of his servants he disowned me for his child; and that thought breaks my heart."

"Thee must not believe it," said Mrs. Blyford; "it is not probable."

"I am assured of it by one who had my interest very much at heart. I had better, therefore, never seek my mother, nor try to learn who she was."

"Can thee recollect," asked Mrs. Blyford, "in what words he disclaimed thee?"

"A faithful servant was pleading for me, as his natural daughter, I believe."

"And I suppose then, he said, thee was not his natural daughter."

"I be-

“ I believe it was exactly so.”

“ Then be comforted, Peregrina ; he meant it very differently from what thee understands. The Spirit moves me to think he meant that thee was his legitimate child ; and thinking so, I give thee my word that I will not rest, nor will John Blyford rest, till thee has found out thy mother, or who she was.”

“ O Madam ! could I think so, I should be too happy ; I never dared trust myself with the thought.”

“ It becomes thee, and becomes us all indeed, Peregrina, to be cautious how we admit hope that may end in disappointment ; thee is a very good young woman, and I need not tell thee how necessary it is while we hope the best, always to be prepared against the worst. Trust me thee shall find a father and a mother in John and Mary Blyford, if they cannot find for thee
a better

a better parent. Thee is a good young woman, and I love thee as my own."

Peregrina could only weep her gratitude for the protection offered her; and comforted by the affectionate expressions of Martha, who would not quit her, they waited, in expectation almost equal, the arrival of Mr. Blyford, who being informed by his wife of what had happened, called up restive Sarah, and in the mildest terms inculcated on her the duty she owed to society in revealing what she knew of the person she had mentioned, and pointed out to her the important privilege allowed her of doing good.

Whether male eloquence still possessed over the heart of Sarah its superior influence, or whether Mr. Blyford addressed himself less *misconceivably* to her reason, or her purse, is of no importance to guess; but Sarah set off all her power of revelation; and having gone through the truth
faith-

faithfully, excepting a little vilifying natural to her, she had volunteered an appendix, which told how Joan, the clumsiest creature in the world, after having *loped* the Lord knew with who, and spent all her thousand pounds in fine caps, and plays, and filks, and fattins, came to great want, and died a beggar, as all such proud misses did who loped with men, and did not behave themselves like gentlewomen born and bred.

Mr. Blyford dismissed Sarah, and came instantly to make his report to the ladies.

He prefaced what he had to say by expressions of the sincerest concern for his young friend, and by every offer that parental regard could prompt. It hurt him to be the messenger of a sad detail; he wished Sarah had never been admitted into his family; he could learn from her nothing more than that Joanna Doveridge, the only survivor of Lord Doveridge's family,

mily, had been a ward of her father's, —that she had clandestinely left his house, while under age; and that having lived a life of imprudence, she had died in obscurity.

Here ended Peregrina's hopes; and little was the consolation she found in that certainty which she had till now thought must be far preferable to the misery of doubt and ignorance. The family concurred in reprobating the conduct of Sarah, who, but at Peregrina's request, would have been immediately removed from the house. She, curious to hear, if it were but a repetition of galling truths, all she knew of her mother, begged she might, at least for a short time, be tolerated.

Mrs. Blyford, who had more at leisure than any one else, remarked the ill temper with which her servant delivered her testimony, was inclined to suspect its veracity; and still ruminating on Mr. Byram's

seeming renunciation of Peregrina, she earnestly wished to investigate the whole affair; and for the sake, at least, of *Joan's* memory, to discover whether she had not been the *wife* of Mr. Byram.

A consultation was held on the means most likely to effect this valuable purpose, in which the family shewed a disposition to undertake any trouble that promised success, and it was at last agreed, that a visit to the parish of Milham, in Berkshire, where Mr. Rufford had lived and died, and where Joanna Doveridge must be still remembered, would be the most efficacious plan. It was on Monday that it was proposed, and the following Monday, as the first day Mr. Blyford, who was then going into the west to visit a dying relative, could make convenient, was named for the expedition.

CHAP. IX.

WHILE the oppressed Elizabeth, as Pegregrina Lamorne, was experiencing the reward of her undeviating integrity, in the voluntary attachment of friends her merit had made for her, Miss Byram was recovering from her fever, and by returning to all her former habits, convinced those she seemed to live only to torment, that her superstitious fear of dying had produced no good effect on her mind. The attention she had received from Lady Armathwaite excited no gratitude in her; nor did she, when she saw her laid up by the fatigue she had undergone, in any one instance offer to repay her kindness. She only improved the opportunity to take advantage of the relaxation it had produced

in those, whose business it was to watch her. She ate most miscellaneously, and occasionally solaced herself with a visit to the butler's pantry, the servants' hall, or the stable.

In the mean time a very different scene was acting at Coventry. Just at the time when Lady Jemima began to despair of any return from Peregrina, the love-sick Miss Arabella Byram arrived, but not indeed clothed in *the yellow and purple robe of Hymen*, nor lighted by his *saffron torch*. She came in the Holyhead coach; and, when introduced to her mother, had to present her, not with her Adonis of a son-in-law, but with a detail of his barbarity, in having, in the most cruel, perfidious manner, dropped her on the road. Pretending that the confined air of a close carriage did not agree with him, he had mounted himself on the box; and, when the coach stopped last, was reported to have betaken himself, with some expressions

sions not quite becoming his elegance, or the chaste reputation of his travelling companion, to another conveyance.

Lady Jemima, more inclined to reflect on her daughter's excessive folly, than to condole with her; and more desirous to probe, than to heal her wounded heart, with astounding sharpness *hoped she was married!*

“Yes, my dear mother,” answered Miss, in a tragedy attitude, “*in the sight of Heaven* we are one; for what could be more holy than such vows? and at the resurrection of the just, when love shall claim its love, and hearts seraphic sink in mutual bliss, I’ll call him husband, lover, father, friend!”

“Nonsense, girl; are you crazy? tell me, are you really his wife? his lawful wife?”

Miss replied,

“ By honour bound, by mutual love entwin’d;
 “ But holy church hath not pronounc’d its blessing.”

“ In the name of God,” cried her Ladyship, in a rage, “ do not talk such infernal nonsense ; why, your character is gone ! what do you come here for ? ”

Miss spouted,

“ In sight of angels still we are virtuous ;
 “ For thought of ill hath never foil’d our hearts ;
 “ But the tyrannic world’s dark prejudice
 “ Who can withstand ? Receive me yet, dear mother ;
 “ And own me still for a forlorn Calista.”

“ *Calista*, indeed ! ” retorted mama ; “ you are a pretty Calista ! And what do you think I am to do with your Calista-ship ? If you think I *will*, or *can* maintain you, you are monstrously mistaken : so you may troop to your heavenly husband ; for, by the living God, I will have nothing to say to you.”

“ You

“ You won’t, won’t you ? ” taunted Calista ; “ well, its just as you please ; I did guess as much ; but I have more strings than one to my bow, Madam—I know I am not far from my grandfather’s ; and I am sure if he once hears one half of what I can tell, he will, if it is only to plague you, be kind to me.”

Lady Jemima paused—she knew Miss Arabella well enough to be convinced, that with much less provocation than her present distress, she dared do whatever she threatened ; and, foreseeing that a visit from her to Sir Clifford might, more completely than any thing else, ruin her own projects, she lowered her tone, came to a parley, agreed on a truce, and at length made peace and an alliance.

Even in Arabella’s rage and nonsense, she saw talents that might more effectually aid an imposition on Sir Clifford, than the nearer age, or more ripened understanding

of the elder sister; and Lassiter, who made her that day a visit, and who dreaded nothing so much as the introduction of Elizabeth herself, gave his opinion in favour of overlooking Miss's misdemeanors, and enlisting her into the service.

Covetousness and docility being the only qualities requisite in the business; and the former producing the latter in the mind of Arabella, her immediate introduction, in due form, to her grand-father, who was a little recovered from his illness, was decided on, and Mr. Lassiter, being then, in consequence of the absence of Mr. Broome, in the plenitude of power, he had address enough to persuade Sir Clifford of the generosity of forgiveness, and to dispose him to see Lady Jemima, when she came to introduce Mr. Byram's daughter.

Arabella had been so well tutored, that she not only had her part at her fingers' ends, but she entered into the very spirit
of

of it. She therefore was far less daunted than her mother, when they were ushered into Sir Clifford's apartment; and when the old man, agitated almost to childishness, could only reach out a hand to each, and iterate to his daughter-in-law, "I forgive you;" and to his grand-child, "I am glad at my heart to see you."

Miss answered all questions incomparably well; and, being a shewy girl, brought very forward by the lessons she had learnt at school, she neither betrayed her age, nor disappointed Sir Clifford's hopes; and Lady Jemima was so humble, so penitent; she shed so many tears, and was so affected whenever Mr. Byram's name was mentioned, that Sir Clifford, delighted with his visitors, protested that his grand-daughter should have no home but Byram Park, and expressed a wish that Lady Jemima would take the charge of her and of his family.

He inquired after his other grand-daughters, and hearing that one was very comfortably situated with Lord and Lady Armathwaite, he expressed some surprize at having never heard of the Earl's second marriage ; asked who his present lady was ; and, in his eagerness to talk to his new favourite, forgot he was not answered.

These matters succeeded to the wish of as fine a swindling gang as ever practised deception. Mrs. Browne, to whom Lady Jemima was remarkably civil, concurred in all their schemes ; they had some footing at Byram Park, and it was not likely Sir Clifford would long puzzle their ingenious wits.

Miss Byram, the person of the most importance in the family, was noticed by all her grand-father's friends, and began to be looked up to as a great heiress ; and for some weeks Sir Clifford forgot, in the joy of exhibiting her, how fast he was verging
to

to the grave. He indulged her in all her expensive whims ; and mistaking her confidence for superiority of genius, he frequently rendered himself in a small degree, ridiculous, by clapping when she squalled out of tune, or exhibited a blue and green daubing, to entertain the company assembled to feed his pardonable vanity.

But a small bustle soon disturbed these *country mice* in their visit to their great friend. Mr. Broome, no one knew why, but all rejoiced at it, was from home ; but unfortunately poor Dennis Geohegan had found his way back again ; and so terrible a personage as a simple Irish clown, was potent enough to alarm the party.

It was fortunate for these projectors, that Dennis thought it, in his wisdom, most prudent to pay his first visit to Mr. Laffiter, to complain to him of the ill-treatment he had met with, and to bespeak his influence towards propitiating his two masters. The

honest Hibernian had not the smallest suspicion that his compulsory voyage was the handy-work of Lady Jemima, or the contrivance of Mr. Lassiter; he therefore took the condolence he met with in very good part, and seemed very well satisfied that he escaped without blame; perhaps, remembering, that at the time of his being conveyed on board the ship, he was not perfectly master of his faculties. Lassiter, with great shew of reason, represented to him the additional difficulty his failure in his errand, and his long absence had thrown in the way of his re-admission into Sir Clifford's family; and teaching him to expect no mercy from Mr. Broome, he reduced the poor fellow to such a state of despondency and ductility, that had he advised recourse to the next horse-pond, Teague was quite in a mood to think well of his judgment. It was therefore no difficult matter to make him accept a letter of recommendation to a friend of Mr. Lassiter's in London, who, he was assured, would procure

procure

procure him a place, and in the mean time, if he took care not to mar his own interest by premature appearance again in the neighbourhood, Mr. Laffiter undertook to overcome all his difficulties, and to re-instate him with eclat in the family he was most anxious to serve.

This impediment removed, the trio seemed more firmly fixed than ever. Lady Jemima's private marriage was known only to Mrs. Browne; and her Ladyship conducted herself in a way that recommended her more and more to Sir Clifford, while Miss Arabella won his heart by her vivacities, and the credit she did to his liberality. The old man, as if convinced that his prejudices were culpable, began to talk of transplanting Lady Jemima's two daughters into his family; and those whom it concerned began still more cordially than ever, to wish his restless benevolence quiet in the grave.

The month of November passed in halcyon felicity ; and Mr. Broome, having staid away from his parish without assigning any reason, till some of his flock were disposed to join Mr. Laffiter's outcry against his negligence, and Sir Clifford himself began to suspect he should, during the winter, be entertained only by the curate, the horizon of fraud had not a cloud to threaten it with ; and perhaps the ladies would soon, by relaxing, the one her restraints, the other her assiduities, have marred all their good fortune, had not Miss Byram received an unexpected visit from her quondam lover and fellow-traveller, Mr. Charles Grubb, who hearing accidentally, that the young lady had got, as he termed it, *into good loaf*, had withdrawn his five-shilling advertisement of, "*Wants a place, as valet, a young man who dresses hair, shaves, writes a good hand, &c.*" and bestowed the small remnant of his purse in procuring an *al fresco* conveyance by a stage coach, from which he alighted at the gate of Byram Park,

Park, and thence boldly made his way to *the north star of his immoveable adorations*, as, in one of his letters he had christened Miss Arabella.

She was called from Sir Clifford, to attend the gentleman in the hall. Gladly would she have refused him the requested audience, but the experiment was dangerous; and as his message was respectful, it betrayed nothing; and she doubted not that a few of the many guineas Sir Clifford's bounty enabled her to throw away, would quiet the fellow, and get rid of him.

But *the fellow* was neither to be so quieted; nor by any means in her power, could she get rid of him. He talked highly of her promises, which his sister, and her own many letters could prove—he reminded her, how entirely her reputation depended on his silence; and in this conference Miss Arabella so far improved her
know-

knowledge of the world, as to find out, that it is not always in the power of those who have fostered impudence, to repress it when it becomes troublesome.

All depending on her appeasing him, she endeavored to temporize, but he would not wait an hour for her resolution : he protested that unless she suffered him to share her good fortune, he would instantly divulge her conduct, and ruin her with those she depended on ; and had not Arabella's fertile imagination suggested to her immediately an expedient, her remaining at Byram Park, even the ensuing night, would have been doubtful.

Having a little soothed him by a few fair speeches, and gained his acquiescence to her plan, by assuring him that a very short time, and Sir Clifford's certain death, must put it in her power to place her *dear Charles* in the zenith of beatitude, she went to her grandfather with a coun-

countenance of doubt, respect, and humility, and speaking hastily, as in great agitation, said, " My dear Sir, I am quite frightened at what I have done. I have taken such a liberty, as even you, good as you are to me, cannot, I fear, pardon."

" If my pardon, my dear child, can make you easy, you have it. What has happened ?"

" Why, dear Sir, here is a young man who was brought up out of charity by the governess I was with in Dublin ; she, poor woman ! is disappointed in her hope of getting a genteel provision for him, and he is come over to get a service : he has no friends in England, and he is come all this way out of his road to ask me to interest myself to get him a place. I have told him how good you are, and I inconsiderately said, without first consulting you, that you would, I was certain, give him a night's lodging here."

" Trust

“ Trust me, my dear child, I shall never be offended with you or any body for supplying my place by doing an act of benevolence. Let the young man stay by all means. Is he a person of good character ?”

“ Very good, indeed, Sir ; he has maintained his mother and five sisters for several years.”

“ How could he do that, my dear, if he has been out of all employment ?”

“ Oh, he has been at sea, and sent his wages ; and he always goes to church constantly, and reads the Bible for his amusement, and is so good !—you have no idea, Sir, how good he is.”

“ Well, my dear, if you give so good an account of him, I am well inclined to think him deserving. I have had no servant

vant in Dennis's place, supposing I were to take him?"

" O that would be charming!"

" Can he read and write?"

" O yes, vastly well; he can do any any thing. Shall I go and tell him you will keep him?"

" Let him come to me, my dear child; I will speak to him myself."

Miss flew to give Mr. Charles Grubb his cue: he pretended to think it extremely inconsistent with his genteel situation in life to *personate* a servant; but his passion at last conquering his scruples, he followed her, went through his interrogatories perfectly to the satisfaction of his new master; and immediately, before the least hint of the business had even reached the servants'-hall, he was enrolled of their number.

number. He had address enough to please Sir Clifford. Lady Jemima, though too sagacious to be deluded by her daughter's legend of Mr. Grubb, thought it prudent to be silent; and the young lady herself, who was vastly fond of riding on horse-back with only a servant, and preferred the new footman to the old coachman, had sufficient opportunity of unwitnessed conversation with him, to tutor him and keep him in patience and good humor.

CHAP. X.

LADY JEMIMA in silence watched all this, and talked confidently to Mrs. Browne, now become nearly her equal, on the demolition all their hopes must experience, should Arabella be Sir Clifford's heir, and marry this indigent fellow, from whose justice or generosity no advantage to themselves could be expected. Suggestions such as these were not lost on Mrs. Browne, who had as keen an eye as any one of the party to her own interest; and who moreover had discovered that Mr. Charles Grubb was very handsome, and likewise very *genteel-behaved* whenever he *included* himself into the housekeeper's *department*. She was therefore commissioned by her half sister-in-law, and half-mistress,

mistress, to hint to Mr. Charles Grubb, that Miss Byram, notwithstanding appearances, would never have a shilling of Sir Clifford's property; and on her own account she added to this comfortable piece of intelligence the sight of legal securities, which she herself possessed, to the value of five hundred pounds; she said, that whoever she married, should not be made to dance attendance on her or her grand-father; and, in short, she so distracted the poor young man between future contingencies and present advantages, that Miss Byram detected him wavering. She saw her danger, and prudently averted it, by a shew of bank notes and jewels, presents to her from Sir Clifford; she then commissioned him to get the banns published in a distant parish, in his own name, and that of Arabella Byram, which she trusted would deceive those with whom it was her intent to pass for Elizabeth.

The conclusion of the match, which, however suspected by Lady Jemima, she did not chuse to cavil at, lest her own interest should fall to the ground, made little difference in the situation of affairs at Byram Park ; and *Mrs. Grubb* still triumphed as Miss Byram, every day increasing her impatience to see herself released by Sir Clifford's death, from the masquerade in which she bore so splendid a character.

At length Mr. Broome returned, but not to the situation of respect and esteem he had possessed in the mind of Sir Clifford, who chid him severely for his absence, and seemed still more dissatisfied when he declared the business that had called him away, was not such as he could reveal. It would, indeed, have been folly to reveal it, for he had been on a fruitless search after some traces of Joanna Dove-ridge ; and having confined his inquiries, for want of better information, to such
of

of Byram's friends as had been the companions of their youthful days ; he had shunned carefully all Lady Jemima's connections as hostile to his wishes, and had traversed great part of England, Scotland, and Ireland, to no purpose.

He soon heard of the additions Sir Clifford had made to his family ; and looking with a jealous eye upon two women who appeared to him the puppets of some scheme, he gave little credit to Lady Jemima's obsequiousness, or Miss Byram's confident vivacity : he could not, indeed, dispute their pretensions : he was told, and he had no authority for doubting it, that the young lady was Mr. Byram's daughter by his first marriage, of which marriage he had himself procured legal evidence by an authenticated copy of the register from his former parish ; and by this act of justice he had only so much the more effectually rivetted in Sir Clifford's doting affection, the person his own ideas rejected

rejected from every claim to it. He had not the smallest difficulty in believing that the young lady was a Byram: she, as well as her sister, inherited Lambert's features, but there was now and then an astute glance, so much like the cunning expression of Lady Jemima's countenance, and she was so widely different from every thing he remembered of lovely Miss Doveridge, that under any other circumstances, his strong persuasion would have prompted him unhesitatingly to declare her not only not the daughter of Joanna, but the truest offspring of Lady Jemima.

It was, however, impossible to do any thing against such complete prepossessions; for Sir Clifford now appeared attached to Miss Byram as much by personal choice, as by regard to his son's memory, and had not unfrequently declared, that were his dear Elizabeth an alien to his family, he still, from a knowledge of her multifold excellencies, should make her his heir.

He wished for nothing on this side the grave, but that he might be permitted to see her well married; but this, alas! he could not hope for in his declining state.

Mr. Broome had not been at home many days, before he had an opportunity of observing the affability with which Miss Byram behaved to her groom in one of her equestrian airings. Depressed as he was by Sir Clifford's misguided partiality, he considered that however injurious to a family such an indiscretion might prove, he had little chance of being believed, should he, as a friend, advise the dismissal of Mr. Charles Grubb, who was known to be universally a favourite, and whose franked covers gave his fellow servants an idea, and were to his lady a confirmation, of his importance.

While poor Broome's indignation and anxiety worried him almost to death, he was requested by the clergyman of the parish

parish where Mr. Charles and Miss Arabella had been privately, in one of their long airings, united, to relieve him, by doing duty for him the next Sunday, from the distress occasioned by his own illness, and the sudden dismissal of his curate, who had given great offence the day before to one of the first men in the country, by publishing, without his concurrence, the banns for his daughter and a young officer of dragoons, whom he had once kicked out of his house.

Broome, ever ready to do a good-natured action, complied; and having to marry a rustic couple before he read the service, he opened the register and saw the names of Charles Grubb and Arabella Byram. What was before only suspicion, supported by internal sentiment, was now confirmation strong; and when, with the devotion of an honest heart, he entered the desk, and besought the Divine blessing on his office, he could not forbear a mo-

mentary ejaculation, in which he appealed to the justice of Heaven against the powers of darkness.

He performed his duty to the edification of his hearers, and then mounting his horse, in deep thought returned home, lamenting most seriously that it was not only the *fate* of the unsuspecting to be duped, but too frequently their *choice*, and well convinced that were he to stir an inquiry concerning Miss Byram's title to that appellation, he was more likely to raise up Mr. Charles Grubb into a powerful enemy, than to open Sir Clifford's eyes to the villainy that hedged him in.

The old gentleman's wished-for death having been thus long most cruelly postponed, the individuals who composed the faction had time for observation ; and it was with no benignity that Lady Jemima contemplated the very glaring *penchant* that her daughter discovered, to all but Sir Clifford,

Clifford, for Mr. Charles Grubb. She mentioned her uneasiness to Laslitter and to Mrs. Browne. The lawyer had already seen it, and seemed prepared against it in his own mind; but the gentlewoman was sure there was nothing more than a little *armless* giddiness in it. Charles was very prudent, and Miss, such a great *fortin* as she would be, would never sure *demean* herself to *trigue* with a footman: then Charles was so obliging and so good natured, that she was sure, if he was to go, some other folks would not be long after him, for the best place in the world. Lady Jemima, never dull in understanding a hint, perceived that the matter must be pressed no farther in this quarter, and began to feel that she was in some measure the slave of her own servant.

Amongst the families who visited at Byram Park, was that of the Duke, whose son, the slender Marquis, had failed in his elopement with Lady Almerina Delaford.

The affair had so disgusted the friends of the young lady to whom he was contracted, that the match had broken off with much animosity; and the Duke being extremely earnest to retrieve the honour of his house, and to obliterate the remembrance of his son's folly, by marrying him respectably, cast his eyes towards Miss Byram; and finding the Marquis not at all averse to the connection, but on the contrary, impressed rather in favour of the lady, he resolved immediately to make a visit in form to Sir Clifford, and propose the alliance, which he could not doubt, unless the fair one's hand was engaged, would be accepted. Accordingly his Grace set out, and finding Sir Clifford much recovered, and in his library, after a few inquiries and condolences, he opened the business, and received the baronet's most grateful thanks for the honour intended him and his grand-daughter, of which he would duly inform her, and would wait on his Grace the next day, if
his

his health permitted, with the answer she should furnish him with, which, considering not only the superiority of rank, but the personal recommendations of the young Lord, he had no doubt would be, as his own was, a grateful acquiescence.

Miss Byram, whose delicacy would have been too much shocked, had it been mentioned to her before the Duke, was called, immediately as he departed, to hear on how important an errand he had come to Byram Park. Sir Clifford, whose joy was too tumultuous to allow of free articulation or choice of phrase, could tell her only that now he desired nothing more than to depart in peace, for that he should see her settled to his own satisfaction. He then named the Marquis as a candidate for her favour; and the young lady evinced, by the rapid changes in her color and countenance, how sensible she was of *the importance of the errand*, if not of her felicity.

H 4

“ So,

“ So, just so,” cried Sir Clifford in ecstacy, “ looked your grand-mother when I, then a smart young fellow with a bag wig, Brussels’ ruffles, and a sword by my side, told her she must no longer be coy and coquetish, but take me or refuse me. Ah, poor thing! she lived but a twelve-month after our marriage.”

Miss was not much disposed to draw foreboding inferences from this ill-timed observation. She scarcely heard it; for she, dear girl! was wholly taken up with considering how she might contrive to have two husbands. Mr. Charles Grubb, she could not, she feared, get rid of—the Marquis she could not think of foregoing. Her embarrassment, as well as her circumstances, rendering it impossible for her to give her grand-father an answer, she begged a few hours for consideration, and left the old gentleman delighted with her affected modesty and docility.

She

She fought instantly Mr. Charles Grubb, who fortunately was parading the sweep before the house, with the horses ready for her airing. She mounted, galloped to the nearest grove, and there beckoning her satellite, and being assured that Mr. Broome, who had just passed them, was out of sight and hearing, she told him how grievously she was distressed; and finding no resource in his wits, she, under pretence of her terror of disobliging *old Cliff*, proposed to Charles the relinquishment of her, for the sum of a thousand pounds, which she promised should be his on her marriage.

But Charles, though he cared little now for the lady, and had not always been insensible to the creams and syllabubs, the hanches and ragouts, the cinnamon water and the ratafia, which Mrs. Browne pilfered for him, was still too much delighted with the idea of having married his mistress, and with the prospect of having a

legal claim on her great expectations, to relinquish her; and she could prevail on him no farther than to suffer her to do any thing not inimical to his interests, which might secure her own with *old Cliff*. She told him it was not improbable, that unless the tiresome old fellow died first, as she prayed Heaven he might, she might be driven to consent to the marriage, though in her heart she abhorred it; but that should this be the case, and should she even be compelled to cheat the wretch by marrying the Marquis, it would be of no consequence, as it must be the first marriage that should stand good; and she gave him her word and honour that, instantly as she had secured for her dear Charles the property she was heiress to, she would avow her situation, and return with rapture to his arms. In this, Charles, without much scruple, concurred; and Arabella felt at liberty to be a marchioness when she pleased, and to use him as it suited her.

CHAP. XI.

SIR CLIFFORD was furnished with the young lady's consent; the matter was instantly blazed abroad: Lady Jemima and Laffiter saw great things; the one considered her daughter's being a duchess as a sure bulwark for herself against all future misfortune; the other dreamt of a great stewardship and a purchased title: the wedding was talked of; the London newspapers got the intelligence; and on the morning after Mr. Blyford had set out for the west, Peregrina saw the article which stated that the Marquis's intended bride was *Miss Elizabeth Byram, the only daughter of Lambert Byram, Esq. of the kingdom of Ireland, by his first marriage with the Hon. Miss Doveridge, daughter and*

H 6

sole

sole heiress of the last baron of that family; and farther added, that the ceremony was to be performed at the seat of Sir Clifford Byram, in Northamptonshire.

At the time when she cast her eye on the article, she was going to put into execution a design she had ruminated on all night, that of imparting to Ami Bonange the whole of her history and distresses, and interesting him in the discovery of her mother. She was now farther encouraged to do so, by the intelligence she had so fortuitously lighted on, which persuaded her, as strongly as Mrs. Blyford was before persuaded, that her mother was *privately* but *lawfully* the wife of Mr. Byram.

She had instantly communicated to her friends the news she had met with; and Mrs. Blyford had strenuously recommended an immediate inquiry as the only means of preventing some unaccountable imposition. She represented to Peregrina, that
were

were she, as Elizabeth Byram, the legitimate daughter of Mr. Byram, a large part of his property must belong to her, if he died intestate : this advantage, Sir Clifford being living, was not so certain ; and Peregrina set against it the hatred she was taught to suppose her grand-father entertained towards her ; but to this Mrs. Blyford was not inclined to pay much credit ; she was convinced Sir Clifford was duped, and had very bad people about him ; and she thought very little of what had been asserted was to be relied on.

Peregrina wrote, as she had designed, to Ami Bonange a detail of all that had happened, and of her own story ; and conjured him, by every sentiment of filial piety and common charity, to make all possible inquiry into the fate of Joanna Doveridge, who was undoubtedly her father's wife and her mother ; and whom she could not believe to have lived or died, as Sarah Earle had, she was persuaded, maliciously

liciously represented. She farther begged him to learn who it was that the Marquis, whom she described by his title, was about to marry.

The next and far more arduous business was to write to Sir Clifford Byram himself; a measure which Mrs. Blyford urged with all the force of reason; it was the hardest task she had ever yet undertaken; for like all persons in such a situation, she forgot that her inability itself would plead more powerfully for her than any eloquence.

At last, thinking it of importance to save the post, and finding her courage did not increase by consideration, she hastily wrote :

“ HONORED SIR,

“ I AM told you hold me in utter abhorrence; I have been strictly enjoined never to usurp your name, or to boast myself

myself of your family ; yet I see myself described in the public papers as enjoying your favour ; and I am persuaded some one is most grossly imposing on your goodness ; who it is I do not even wish to guess ; I ask for no advantage to myself ; but surely I am not obliged to rest silent, when I have every reason to believe you are not as adverse to me as you are described.

“ If, Sir, it is to *Elizabeth, the only daughter of Mr. Byram, by his marriage with Joanna Doveridge*, that you mean to be kind, I am she ; though the commands I received from you have compelled me to assume another name, and to conceal my origin. Do not, therefore, I beseech you, countenance fraud ; at least, let me entreat you to know on whom you bestow your parental regard. I envy no one the enjoyment of your favour, if it be their right ; but I should be accessory to the deception, were I to acquiesce in it.

“ Should

“ Should you, Sir, be so far favourably disposed towards me as to wish for farther information, the direction I subjoin will find me as

Your very dutiful grand-child,
PEREGRINA LAMORNE.”

Mrs. Blyford, to whom Peregrina shewed her letter for her approbation, was convinced that it would be followed by an immediate summons for her to Byram Park, if not by a visit in person from her grand-father, and kindly offered, in either case, to accompany and support her. But Peregrina had far less sanguine hopes; she had seen wickedness in glory, till she began to think it the usual course of things.

Her mind was now tortured beyond what she had hitherto experienced; in vain she appealed to the miniature of her mother, and wept over it; in spite of the words that accompanied her receiving it, she could get no satisfaction from it, and she

she was in an agony of doubt, as painful
 to discourse on as to conceal. Her rumi-
 nations suggested to her no hope that
 could counterbalance the presentiment,
 that from her utmost diligence she should
 derive no other satisfaction than, perhaps,
 the knowledge of the spot where her mo-
 ther was buried; and she could not but
 apprehend, that by her application to Sir
 Clifford, which she saw no means of sup-
 porting to the proof of her identity, she
 should only rank herself in the number of
 detected impostors. Even should he be
 inclined to suspend his opinion, how could
 she prove herself the true Elizabeth? the
 picture she possessed might have been pro-
 cured by any other method than that of
 Mr. Byram's gift; her governess, who
 could have detailed her father's conduct
 towards her, was no more; Lady Jemima
 seemed by all the world to be held in dis-
 repute, even should she, as was not pro-
 bable, against the interest of her daughter,
 be disposed to identify their rival: little
 more

more probability was there that either of the young ladies would serve, to their prejudice, one whom they had so uniformly contemned : Dennis Geoghegan, could he be found, was far more likely to avouch his master's dereliction of her than her claim on the family : no one of the servants of Mr. Byram was at all within her reach ; it did not appear to her that Lady Jemima had even confidentially disclosed to Mrs. Haccombe the relation she stood in to her deceased husband ; she herself had strengthened an opinion against any such claim by the adoption of another designation, and by her punctilious regard to the commands she had received ; commands of which she now began to see the artifice and the cruelty ; for in the tempestuous restlessness of her thoughts she had, with a conviction little less potent than that of truth, guessed that Lady Jemima had succeeded in making peace with Sir Clifford, and for some reason, unintelligible to her, who was too humble to suppose her own
 impor-

importance, had imposed one of her own daughters on him as Mr. Byram's eldest offspring. On this supposition she began to found a still greater hope that her mother's character had been rescued from ignominy; *how*, she could not penetrate—*by whom*, it was as impossible to discover, so difficult was it to ascertain even her friends and enemies.

Sometimes recollecting the letter she had received from Lady Jemima, she was inclined to think more favourably of her, and to suppose that she had sought her to re-instate her in Sir Clifford's good opinion; and here, whatever was her ladyship's motive, she was not very wide of the truth; but against this she opposed the omniscience of Ami Bonange, and was then half inclined to think Lady Jemima had designed only to remove her still farther out of the way, before she brought forward her own daughter in her stead.

In anxiety that admitted of no rest, or of her taking any sustenance, she remained undisturbed by any event till the morning of Thursday, when she received from Lady Cottisbrooke a very affectionate reply to her last communication, in which she inclosed a letter from her son Hamilton, expressing the severest concern for the mischief his volatility had occasioned, and beseeching her to use her interest in the family she was then in, to procure him an introduction to their favour, and to overcome the formidable obstacles that opposed his atoning, as he wished, for his past misconduct : he shewed that his heart, easily impressed, was eminently susceptible of pity, and that he had a mind that could not rest under the idea of having done an injury.

Peregrina's thoughts were called from her miseries by the wish, natural to every ingenuous mind, of aiding a friend ; but to indulge that wish required great circumspection

cumspection and delicacy, as it was more than possible that the very first step taken to promote Martha Blyford's happiness, would for ever preclude it.

She had devised no method, when Martha herself, with an unintelligible mixture of various passions in her countenance, came to her with an open letter in her hand, which, as if too much interested in its contents to repeat them, she put into friend Lamorne's hand. She read with an increase of her vexations the first paragraph, which shewed that it was not as she had at first imagined, from Hamilton Courtland, but from Mr. Blyford, who said, that he was most unwillingly obliged to postpone the scheme planned for the ensuing week, as his uncle was then just dead, and the management of his affairs would not admit of his leaving the place he was in, in less than ten days. Mr. Blyford then in the most affectionate manner congratulated his daughter on the bequest

bequest of thirty thousand pounds, to which, by the will of her deceased relative, she was instantly and uncontrollably entitled, and with expressions of the firmest reliance on her prudence, that she would shew that, however young, she might be safely trusted with one of the greatest of all worldly temptations, *prosperity*, he hinted to her the numerous felicities her uncle's bounty would procure for her, in the ability it conferred to do good.

Mortifying as was the first intelligence of this letter to Peregrina, she could turn with heart-felt joy to congratulate her amiable friend on its contents ; but Martha, far from exhibiting the usual symptoms of delight on such an occasion, was in tears, for which she would give no reason ; and to avoid questions, she withdrew.

Pere-

Peregrina wishing much to sound her disposition towards Courtland, without betraying her information of his sentiments, at their next meeting asked her, with affected cheerfulness, what she intended to do with her wealth. She answered very seriously, “ first, to make *thee* happy, or, at least, if that cannot be, to prevent thee from ever wanting.”

Peregrina, repenting of a query to which she had expected a very different answer, colored, and excusing her momentary want of thought, she assured Martha her curiosity arose solely from her wish to find that the bequest of her uncle would establish her happiness.

“ That it can never do,” she replied, gravely, and with emotion. “ I am a simple girl, friend Peregrina ; and living as we do, I cannot tell always what I ought to do ; so that I often think, and indeed am *sure*, I must be very odd and very absurd ;

absurd ; for by the little I *do* see, I am convinced that if all people were like me, they could not do as they do ; and to tell thee truth," added she, smiling faintly, " I often think every body more in the right than I am, for they seem to know better than I do what things will make them happy ; but when I ask myself whether what makes them happy, would make me so, I feel it would not.—I have often thought ; for I think very strangely, that the world is very much like a great dinner, where I have seen some dish that has looked very nice, and every body has admired it, and when I have tasted it, perhaps it was too sweet, or too salt, or too acid for my palate—but what I blame myself for is, that I do not remember this ; but when I have been shewn that people who have every thing I have wished for, are still not happy, I am again too apt to be cheated, and to believe it is the fault of their palate, and that it would suit mine."

Peregrina could not forbear smiling ; and Martha, as if encouraged by her attention, went on :

“ I have seen, for instance, that many people who are married to those they love, are very far from happy : I have a cousin that is a terrible instance of this ; but then I think he is not so good tempered—he is not, if you understand me, so much to be liked as Hamil—— as—— as, I was going to say, he *might be*—and his wife does not take the pains to please him that I would do.”

Poor Martha had wandered so far from her first idea, that it was difficult to get home again. Peregrina filled up the pause by expressing her concern that any thing should so early in Martha's life have so clouded its prospect, as to induce gloomy ideas of its comforts. “ You have half-named Captain Courtland,” said she ; “ I wish it was possible to think well of him.”

“ Thee cannot, sure, think *ill* of him !”

“ His conduct to *you* !”

“ Oh ! it was my fault. Why did I, an ignorant girl—as ignorant as a nun—and a *Quaker* too—and no-body likes Quakers, fancy that he could be serious ? How could I be so undutiful to my father and mother, as to like one not of our society, and a soldier too ? Oh ! soldiers are very, very bad people ; that is, I mean there ought to be no soldiers, for there should be no fighting—we all ought to live in peace.”

“ Then, had Captain Courtland behaved otherwise, you would still have rejected him for these reasons !”

“ I hope—yes, I think I would ; at least I would have tried. I’ll tell thee, *Peregrina*, all my heart—I do love Hamilton Courtland

Courtland better than all the world beside ; but I am sure I would not wish to love him if it was wrong. I would never displease my father or mother ; for then if I had the whole world, I should be miserable. And now that I am to have so much money of my own, I have been thinking it would be still worse if I was to do as I choose ; for then it would seem as if I took advantage of my old uncle's kindness, to make my father and mother unhappy ; so I am determined, and, indeed, that was what I was so foolish as to cry at—that I will never again think of Hamilton—I am sure he never thinks of me.”

Not having it in her power to answer for the event, Peregrina thought it imprudent to enter farther on this subject. She preferred writing to Lady Cottisbrooke, to suggest the propriety of an application to Mr. Blyford, hopeless as, notwithstanding the general liberality of his opinions,

ons, it appeared; and this she did by the return of the post, too averse to a repetition of her own sufferings to relate them even to her kind friend.

Again she sunk into an unquiet state of dejection, anxious beyond measure when in expectation of letters on the Friday, and depressed to the lowest extremity when disappointed. Saturday increased her distress by the following billet, which precluded all hope in one quarter:

“ MISS LAMORNE,

“ BY the desire of the widow of the late Mr. Byram, who acts at present for Sir Clifford, he being very ill, I have to inform you that her Ladyship knows no such person as you describe yourself to be, and you are hereby desired no farther to molest the family, as it will be at your peril.

“ Your's to command,

“ W. LASSITER.”

It

It was scarcely possible for Mrs. Blyford, or her compassionate daughter, to afford the smallest comfort to their beloved guest, under so cruel a catastrophe of their just expectations. Nothing was wanting on their part : Mrs. Blyford would instantly have taken a journey with her to Byram Park ; but Peregrina's spirit could not brook the hazard of being turned from the gate as an impostor.

She had wept herself into a state of exhausted quiet, when she was told that a man on horseback inquired for her.

She went down into the hall : the man was a stranger, and had the appearance of a servant out of livery ; he had dismounted, gave her a letter, and said he should wait her answer.

Casting her eyes over three sides of the paper, she saw the signature of Ami Bonange. Such a correspondence was not

to be exhibited in public ; with velocity greater than her strength, she ran up stairs, locked her door, and read, after a preface of the most consolatory expressions, this answer to her commission :

“ With regard to the much-talked-of bride elect, I can learn nothing more than you know ; report confirms it in all its circumstances. As to your other more important inquiry, I have done all in my power, how successfully, time only can determine. I wrote to the only person I could recollect, as having any connection with Mr. Byram’s family, and I am promised the satisfaction you wish for, on a condition I hope you will feel little reluctance in obeying, as it requires nothing more than your personal appearance.

“ I commit this to the care of a man you may very safely rely on, and have given him directions to escort you with any friend

friend or friends you may think necessary to your safety, to London, where you will find those that can, better than myself, inform you.

“ If it shall have been in my power to contribute to your peace of mind, I shall think myself abundantly requited, even should you be disposed to seek your origin, and neglect me. Let me once see you in safety; let me be assured you are above my care, and I will instantly cease to trouble you. All selfish considerations fade, when compared to the pleasure of a disinterested action; and I will secure this pleasure to myself, by suspending even my best hopes, and till you command me to do otherwise, and my situation admits of it, by serving you in secret. But remember, Peregrina, that were you environed by a host of lovers—were kings to lay down their crowns, and saints their crosses, to prove their sincerity, no one could boast an honest passion for you than

“ AMI BONANGE.”

“ And with equal sincerity do I return thy honest love,” said the heart of Peregrina, as she read the concluding words. But the letter required an immediate answer ; nay, the bearer waited for it, and an answer really required deliberation ; for however well disposed she might be to trust Ami Bonange, some regard was due to appearances, and she knew not how to satisfy the kind anxiety of Mrs. Blyford, without revealing the mystery of her good genius, for which she had no permission.

She went down again to the hall to ask the man the extent of his orders : he said that his master (but who his master was he would not tell) had told him the lady would be in town that night, that he was, if necessary, to procure a chaise for the purpose, and that in town her destination was Lady Cottisbrooke’s, in New Norfolk Street.

Peregrina

Peregrina was relieved from her doubts, but again embarrassed. as she now could not ask Miss Blyford to accompany her, as she had wished. But with tolerable courage, though extremely agitated, she went in quest of the ladies, and informing them that she was called to Lady Cottisbrooke's in a hurry, in hopes of hearing of her mother, begged them to expedite her journey.

“ And who is to go with thee ? ” said Mrs. Blyford.

“ I must, I fear, go alone.”

“ I should not chuse, indeed, to go with thee, unasked by friend Cottisbrooke; but still thee shall not go alone. Let Sarah Earle go with thee—thee does not like her, nor do I; but she is honest, and may be useful.”

Peregrina consenting, Sarah was ordered to be in readiness. Mr. Blyford's carriage was to go the first stage with her; her escort went forward to bespeak a chaise on the road. Mrs. Blyford sent another man servant, as an additional security, on her confessing that she knew not the messenger sent for her; and with ten thousand dreads, she was just departing, when Miss Blyford begged to speak to her in private. She was apprehensive that Peregrina might, in her zeal for her happiness, divulge what had past between them; but against this fear she easily procured the security of her word.

“How art thee furnished with money?” said careful Martha; “thee will want a great deal in fine London.”

“I have a few guineas,” said Peregrina; “enough for my journey; and Lady Cottingham never forgets my purse.”

“I would

“ I would not intrude,” replied Martha,
“ but thee must remember that I should
like to be of use to thee.”

With a cordial embrace they parted.
Mrs. Blyford expressed a wish soon to see
her young friend again; and she set off,
with a most uneasy mind, and far from
delighted with her companion.

CHAP. XII.

AT Byram Park, Miss Arabella, or rather Mrs. Grubb, was whirling the wheel of fortune at a furious rate. The slender Marquis was every day more enamored. All Laffiter's clerks were busy about settlements: he himself had got so entirely into the good graces of the Duke and his son, that he was looked on as an oracle: he taught *gratis* the art of *racking tenants*, and *letting estates tithe-free*: he preached *short leases* and *quarterly rents*: he projected *inclosures*, and talked of *crown-grants*: he had a *navigation scheme* in his pocket, and a *tontine* in his head: he possessed the noble art of alchymy for the father, and the cup of Circe for the son, to whom he discoursed of *illiberal restraint*,

scanty allowance, post obits, and mortgages; of curricles, phaëtons, cropt bays, and damsels fair, till the young man believed matrimony the gate by which he was to escape from parental avarice, and to gain all his foolish head and throbbing heart had conceived and panted for. Lady Jemima had so well made use of her sagacity respecting Mr. Charles Grubb, and had so well timed some mal-à-propos visits to Arabella, that the terror of her exerting any part of her *disclosing* power, made her daughter as ductile as could be wished; and she had repeatedly promised that when she was a Duchess, dear mama should live like a queen; nay, indeed, the Duke himself had said such fine things of Lady Jemima, that if Mr. Laffiter could have proved his regard for his own interest, as completely as Mr. Charles Grubb had done, it would not have been wonderful if the same day had made the mother a Duchess and the daughter, by the courtesy of England, a Marchioness. There

was

was but one circumstance that gave the party pain ; this was the obstinate vigor of Sir Clifford, whose renovated spirits seemed to sustain him under his decaying strength, to a degree that made it to be apprehended that he would not release the expectants.

Poor Broome, who with tolerable accuracy read their characters, their intrigues, and their distresses, still fretted in imbecility. He saw Sir Clifford frequently, but found him inextricably shackled by his partialities, and so watched by his family, that had his doting afforded any lucid intervals, it was almost impossible to have availed himself of them. The ladies he saw looked on him with a jealous eye ; and the elder having lately talked to him in a wonderfully civil strain of a *better living*, and her *interest with the Duke*, who had now one vacant, he saw it was in contemplation to remove him, which, had the advantage been ever so great, was a
benefit

benefit he did not at that time chuse to accept, any more than the invitations given him repeatedly to the *dances* at Byram Park, the *dinners* at Mr. Laffiter's, or the *fêtes* at the Duke's.

Of the letter which Peregrina had addressed to the justice, as well as compassion of her grand-father, no one but Laffiter was informed ; for he, assiduous friend ! perceiving Sir Clifford's declining faculties, and anxious to spare him and his servants trouble, was so obliging as to intercept his letters at the post-office, and thus effectually secured the old gentleman from seeing such as might give him uneasiness. Those he detained, it must be confessed, were seldom such as he thought *of importance* ; they were generally of the supplicating class, and aimed at that weak fortress, Sir Clifford's humanity. Thus, if he did inadvertently ruin an industrious tenant, or get the Baronet a few curses, for a flinty-hearted landlord, what then ? he saved his
pocket,

pocket, and comforted himself in his pious concern for his ease, by the old observation, that "what the eye never sees the heart never rues." What use could it be of to disturb a man on his death-bed with complaints?

The letter from Miss Lamorne had, together with all other suspected papers, been carefully opened; and as it was part of this diligent agent's policy, to trust, not even his wife, whom he already began to think too cunning for him, he had, without hesitation, replied to it in a way that he doubted not would prevent all further application from that quarter.

Thus were matters circumstanced; and chafing Broome had made a resolution to let the parties go on a little farther, and then at once to overwhelm, at least Mrs. Grubb, when one morning, after a grand supper given at Byram Park, to his Grace, his Lordship, and all the admiring country gentle-

gentlemen of the neighbourhood, just as the day began to dawn, Lady Jemima hastily entered her daughter's apartment, and very properly taking no notice that she was not alone, she bid her rise instantly, for dear Sir Clifford had rung his bell, and was found in a fit.

The young lady, however found asleep when her mother began to call her, was in no danger of another nap. While hastily putting on her clothes, she ran over in her mind, probable consequences as certain futurities, and really evinced no small presence of mind. As little was her recollection clouded, when, on entering Sir Clifford's room, she saw his attendants hindered by their feelings, from the necessary exertions for his recovery; and when Lady Jemima, who stood at the foot of the bed, holding up her ready handkerchief to drown her voice, whispered to her, "*He cannot live ten minutes;*" she was enough herself to reply, "but, good God! there
is

is no will." Such a charming thing is self-possession under severe trials !

This consideration, which at the moment was absorbed in Lady Jemima's habitual hope, and mechanical certainty of happiness in the old man's death at any rate, gave motion to her limbs, and drew her nearer to the moribond.

Either the application of the apothecary, the prayers of his servants, or the rallying vigour of his constitution, saved Sir Clifford once again from the yawning grave ; and in a few hours his recollection had returned, and he gave *hopes* of recovery ; for at present the company were unanimous in *hoping* that he would live at least long enough to make a will ; which Lassiter, who had been duly roused to his aid, assured them with a phlegmatic certainty, was yet to be done. Who should prompt the business, was debated in the next room. Lassiter, accustomed to the work, had

had no reluctance, but Lady Jemima thought it better to come from one of the family ; perhaps the rogues could not trust each other. Be that as it may, Arabella was appointed to visit her grandfather, to beat up his pillow for him, and, handkerchief in hand, to do whatever could convince him of her great love, and his great danger ; two convictions which she saw would forward his making a will without delay, and that in her favor.

But either disdaining even the shadow of selfishness, or fearful that if dear mama was not duly and largely remembered, she might tell tales of Mr. Charles Grubb, when she had, with the utmost delicacy, hoped that her dear grand papa had settled all his affairs ; she added, on her knees beseeching pardon, that she had no other motive for her inquisitiveness, but her fear that that dear woman, Lady Jemima, who had always been a mother to her, should again be left as Mr. Byram
had

had left her, without a provision. Sir Clifford in a faint voice applauded her goodness, and assured her her wish should be fulfilled.

The physician coming to make his equally disinterested visit, Arabella withdrew, to report her progress.

Next went Lady Jemima herself: she was sorry to hear her beloved father thought of disturbing himself by making a will. Surely if Elizabeth's mother was, as was now proved, Mr. Byram's wife, a very short bequest of his property was sufficient. For herself, as she knew she merited nothing, she expected nothing; she had experienced too much undeserved kindness from him already, to ask for more: her girls must learn to get their living, as their father had left them nothing; and for herself, Miss Byram's attachment and promises of assistance were sufficient—it did not become her now,
incon-

inconsiderate as she had been, to aim at independence. Sir Clifford assured her that both she and her children should be benefitted by his will, which, if she would send for Laffiter, he would give him directions to make.

The lawyer had gone home, and when sent for, came in no very pleasant agitation. That *tiresome rascal*, Dennis, was again returned, and he had been detained half an hour to hear his tedious complaints of his London expedition in search of a friend, and in contriving some means of locking him up till he could get rid of him, or Sir Clifford.

“ And what have you done with the fool ?” said gracious Lady Jemima.

“ Why, I have persuaded him that it is death to him to be seen abroad ; and as he can write a tolerable flourishing hand, though I doubt whether he can read it
when

when he has done ; I have proposed to keep him as a clerk for a few days, and I have locked him up to make pot-hooks and hangers by himself."

" A good scheme, verily—now go in to old Cliff."

Laffiter, an obedient husband, obliged his lady, but not quite with the disposition she supposed : for finding Sir Clifford, as from his experience he expected, just capable to *do* an act, but hardly to *judge* of it ; he took his directions, and soon puzzling him with law cant about *trusts and uses*, he convinced him that it was necessary, if his will was designed to be of any effect, that *he* should be nominated sole trustee for those, in whose favour it was to be made. He then hied home, like a rat with a slice of bacon, to mumble his prey according to his own fashion.

The draft was made that afternoon, and read by Lassiter in due form to the testator and the ladies; he being particularly careful, as all his transactions had been ever fair and above-board, that those whom it concerned should know what he had committed to paper; he wished to be certain he had not mistaken Sir Clifford's meaning; people could not be too careful in such important matters as deeds; the interests of whole families depended on their accuracy, and the honesty of those who made them; for his part he always counted money after his own father, for the best in the world might err, and he knew an instance of a gentleman, a client of his, &c. &c. &c.

“ We are all perfectly satisfied,” said Sir Clifford, “ I only wish to make every thing clear, that what I mean for the benefit of my family, may not be spent in law.”

“ Certainly

“ Certainly—certainly—a very proper consideration, my good Sir—I wish every body on their death-bed were as careful. Would you like any body else to overlook the papers? Perhaps Mr. Broome, though, indeed, I am afraid his greediness would be hurt—he will think fifty pounds very little, I fancy, if I may guess from his talking so *largely*.”

“ Let it be an hundred then, said Sir Clifford,” fearing he had not been liberal enough.

“ O, no, by no means,” said Lassiter; “ I only just thought how the Levite would like fifty pounds, after he had boasted that you designed him the advowson of the living.”

“ I must have misled him, then,” said Sir Clifford, “ by something I may have said; for Broome is a very honest man.”

The

The scheme of getting poor Broome's name excluded with ignominy from the will, failing, it would have been idle to have tried farther. Sir Clifford ratified by his approbation what he had heard, and the ladies made proper faces to shew their gratitude, the one for the noble bequest of *the whole of her grandfather's property*, subject only to the payment of some annuities, and a few legacies of small amount; the other for a rent charge on the estate, of five hundred pounds annually, during the life of herself, or either of her daughters.

Sir Clifford intreated that no time might be lost in ingrossing the will, but that, in as simple a form as was consistent with the safety of his property, it might be got ready immediately to be executed; Laffiter undertook to prepare it with his own hand, and having in truth devoted the whole night to the important business, he went the next morning with the will in

his pocket to wait at Byram Park a proper hour for executing. He heard that Sir Clifford had passed the night quietly; and had he not stopt the old butler in his career of eloquence, he might probably have heard that there was less chance than he wished of his client's embarkation on the river Styx.

Lady Jemima and Arabella, whom nothing could prevail on to quit the chamber for a better repose, and whom the joy in prospect had kept tolerably vigilant nurses, met Laffiter, and open mouthed, began to report their observations: he stopped them to inquire what chance he had of admission, and hearing that Sir Clifford had already expressed his impatience for his coming, he soon obtained an audience; and having, as strenuously as he thought proper, urged the old gentleman not to rely wholly on him, but again to hear the will in form, and being assured by his avoiding this delay, that he was
safe,

safe, he called in the witnesses *he had brought with him*, just to save time, and having put the pen into Sir Clifford's hand, a will was executed in due form, by which, *not in trust*, but *for his sole use*, Byram Park, and every part of the family property, except some small legacies, left for a cover to his pretensions, and a sop for any Cerberus, was bequeathed to William Lassiter, attorney at law. The will, as safest in legal hands, was committed to the custody of him who made it, who now cared not how soon that was in his iron chest, or Sir Clifford in his coffin.

Mr. Broome, whom his patron's sudden attack had more seriously and more disinterestedly alarmed, was amongst the first to make inquiries after his rest, and learnt from the servant that their master was then making his will; he therefore forebore sending his message in, but in his return home, being overtaken by the apothecary, he learnt to his great comfort,

that Sir Clifford, though extremely disposed to think himself at the point of death, was in reality much better, and would probably in a few days be at his usual average of health. They parted, and Broome went towards home, deeply musing.

CHAP. XIII.

ALL this time Dennis had spent in durance or in sleep : he had been kept, under pretence of his own danger, locked into his master's own peculiar office, where he had been employed in copying a useless paper, till the time of rest : he had been deposited for the night in a closet adjoining to his master's room, and had been let out in the morning to pursue his occupation, which not at all suiting his genius, especially unassisted by his morning dram, he began to think confinement a worse punishment than any Mr. Broome; or even Sir Clifford, would inflict, and at the same time to meditate on the possibility of getting out at the window, and

stealing over to the opposite public house for a little recruit of spirits, unobserved.

He succeeded in his scheme, so far as to get his dram in peace ; but in crossing the way to return, the only person he espied was Mr. Broome, who with folded arms, and eyes rivetted to the ground, was returning home from the Park.

Occupied as Broome's mind then was, Dennis might have passed him unnoticed, had he not betrayed himself by a doleful exclamation on his own ill fortune. Attracted by his voice, his *quondam* master immediately recollected him, and in gentle terms inquired why he had absented himself, and where he had been. Dennis hesitated and stammered in a manner that sufficiently shewed his contrivance to be at work on, and at a loss for a falsity. Mr. Broome relieved him from his distress, by alarming him about Sir Clifford, of
whose

whose increased illness he was totally ignorant.

It was impossible for the simplicity of Dennis to conceive that any one who expressed concern for another, could be really uninterested in the good or evil of their destiny. He therefore, when Mr. Broome spoke with dejection of Sir Clifford's situation, and his own fears for his safety, instantly forgot the cautions of Mr. Lassiter, and saw in Broome one of his old master's best friends. Soured by the confinement of his present employment, he was willing to risk somewhat of his security to escape from it ; and considering Mr. Lassiter's house as a place which no news of Sir Clifford reached, he promised to confess all that had passed, would Mr. Broome once again admit him into his family. The matter was nearly arranged, when Lassiter passed by : Broome expected him to speak. Dennis awaited his wrath, but scouling at both, he touched

his hat to the parson, and went on; he had gone only a few paces, when he passed again, and returned towards the Park with a quicker pace.

His business there was to spread the alarm among the faction, and if possible to ruin Broome in Sir Clifford's opinion. Having free access to the sick chamber, he boldly made his way thither, and reporting the return of Dennis, and the countenance given by Broome to a vagabond, whose design could be nothing less than the conducting a gang of his countrymen to pillage the mansion-house, he requested Sir Clifford's authority for frightening Mr. Dennis Geoghegan out of the place.

“ I have no proof of his ill intentions,” said Sir Clifford: “ the rascal is apt to get drunk ; but I believe he is honest.”

The

The credulity of the old gentleman's nature was the *virtue* by which Mr. Laffiter and his friends had so greatly benefited, and from which they promised themselves a golden harvest; but in this instance it proved a little inconvenient, for nothing lawyer Laffiter could say had power to terrify Sir Clifford into a suspicion of *rascal Dennis*. As little success had he in his equally moral attempt to deduce from Mr. Broome's listening in the street to Dennis, a natural propensity to harbour thieves, and promote the plans of incendiaries.

Thus failing, he had no recourse but in a consultation with Lady Jemima, in which they agreed to give such directions to the servants as should effectually keep Broome on the outside of the house. When, therefore, after a long conference with Dennis, the parson went again to the Park, with a resolution, whatever consequences might await his temerity, to tell Sir Clif-

ford how grossly he had been imposed on, he was civilly informed that he could have no admission. He asked whose order it was, and heard to his consolation that it was Lady Jemima's.

He returned home again, resolved now on open war. From the communications of Dennis, he was confirmed in his belief that Miss Byram was not the person she represented; and Dennis's observations next day at church, whither Sir Clifford compelled the ladies regularly to go, enabling him to swear to the identity of Miss Arabella, *alias Mrs. Grubb*, Mr. Broome taking him with him in a post chaise, set off for London to consult a legal friend on the method he should pursue.

Danger was apprehended as soon as his departure was known; and it being understood from his curate, that his stay would not exceed three or four days, all
of

of the party, who could with any propriety speak on the occasion, urged on the great wedding; but unfortunately for them, Sir Clifford had once, when pleased with hearing Mr. Broome read the marriage office, promised him, that if ever he had a relation, whom he could influence, a candidate for matrimony, he and he only should perform the service. A promise, however slightly made, was uniformly binding on the mind of the baronet, and he did not feel his conscience at all relaxed by the near approach of that hour when its accounts were to be made up. All the eloquence of the world could not have moved him; and as his opinion of those who urged him would have been far from improved by their perseverance, they were forced, for their own sakes, to rest contented with his fixing the following Saturday, provided Mr. Broome, whose absence and neglect had, notwithstanding, a little piqued him, should be returned.

CHAP. XIV.

PEREGRINA, after a journey, the extreme anxiety of which had been varied only by the tiresome loquacity of Mrs. Earle, who knew nothing of her views or distresses, and who was still *Miss Sally* enough to think a jaunt to *Lanmmun* a glorious thing, and a residence amongst musty Quakers a misery she might now very prudently set at defiance, by engaging in another place.

Her joy when she found that a lady of quality's house was to be their residence, would have amused a mind at ease, even without penetrating the deep schemes in her head of recommending herself to the great gentlemen of whom she fancied the Coun-

Countess's house composed; for had honest Sarah been told that Lady Cottisbrooke maintained half a dozen secretaries of state, and as many masters of the horse, she would not have contradicted her informer.

When, therefore, Peregrina's grateful exclamation of, "Thank God, we are arrived!" taught her that the door the chaise stopped at was Lady Cottisbrooke's, she was disappointed at seeing a brick front that ranged with the street, and a few windows reflecting the light from the door lamps. Of London she remembered only the great houses of the nobility, and she began to think herself and her annihilated three thousand pounds, little inferior to Lady Cottisbrooke and her pretensions.

A coach backed from the door to let the chaise come up; but Peregrina was insensible of all but delay. The house door
was

was open ; some body lent her a hand to alight ; she did not know it to be Hamilton Courtland ; she looked round for the stranger escort, but he was gone ; and while Sarah, half in, half out of the chaise, was exclaiming, “ My gemini, what a poor place ! ” Peregrina slipped up the well-known stairs, and bounding into the drawing-room, threw herself, unable to speak, into Lady Cottisbrooke’s extended arms, while Lady Almerina and Lady Effex seized her hands, and Hamilton waited a pause to address her. Sarah in the mean time was conducted to the house-keeper’s apartment.

A hearty cry relieved Peregrina’s suspended faculties, and enabled her to ask Lady Cottisbrooke if she had expected her coming. She replied that she had, but that the cause of it was very mysterious ; “ for,” said she, “ my information came by a penny post letter, without a name, but which Ham is certain comes from the same

same quarter as the warning that procured me first the pleasure of your company. You shall see it."

Peregrina took the billet, and read in the hand writing of Ami Bonange, these words :

" YOU have an excellent heart—you can feel for the miseries of your fellow creatures—you can participate their felicities. Peregrina Lamorne is coming to you—she will be with you probably at an early hour this evening—be again a guardian to her—be the friend you have been.

" As soon as she arrives, without a moment's unnecessary delay, accompany her to the Royal Hotel, Pall Mall, there inquire for Lord Armathwaite's apartments; send in no name, but desire to speak with him alone."

" Now,"

“ Now,” said Lady Cottisbrooke, as she received the mysterious paper from Miss Lamorne, “ I am ready to do exactly what I am enjoined, though I really do not understand it. I have the carriage at the door in waiting, and I think the sooner you go the better. We will take Hamilton with us ; I suppose you know more of the matter than we do.”

“ I only know,” said Peregrina, “ from a letter I had to-day at noon, and from the man who brought it, that I have some chance of hearing some particulars respecting my poor mother ; but I imagined it was here I was to learn them. I do not like going to Lord Armathwaite : he is brother to Lady Jemima Byram, to whom I am under no obligations ; for her treatment to me has been cruel. Miss Byram, who never was kind to me, is in his family, and I dare say I shall experience from them nothing but contempt and haught-

haughtiness. What can Lord Armathwaite know of my mother?"

"He is lately married," said Hamilton.

"To whom?" said Peregrina, with indifference.

"I forget her name—she was a widow—of no family, I believe."

"Indeed, Madam," said Miss Larmorne, "I do not like to go."

"Shall I go and reconnoitre?" said Hamilton. "I would with all my heart; but I am a poor ambassador, and with us you need not be afraid. I will not leave the room, and I am sure my mother would prevent your being treated cavalierly."

Peregrina reluctantly yielded, and they set out.

Lord Armathwaite's part in this business had been allotted him by a billet which reached him at Chartham, where he and Mrs. Halnaby were painfully watching Joanna's recovery from the effects of her sedulous attendance on Miss Byram, whose ingratitude and obduracy made every succeeding day an addition of vexation. The billet contained only these words :

“ DO you know any particulars concerning Joanna Doveridge, daughter to the last Lord Doveridge ?

“ Direct your answer to A. B. Parliament coffee-house.

“ Rest quiet—you will hear from me again.”

This laconic query, as something to amuse the extreme dejection of Lady Armathwaite, the Earl shewed to her : curiosity was almost extinct in her bosom :
she

she could not believe that the world had aught but misery to bestow ; for she judged, and surely she was excusable, she judged from her own experience ; and she could call Heaven to witness, that though few, “ evil had been her days.”

Lord Armathwaite, assuming the style of his correspondent, answered by the return of the post,

“ YES ; she is my wife.

“ ARMATHWAITE.”

And with less *sang froid* than his lady, waited farther communication.

A special messenger on horseback, more expeditious than the mail, on the following evening left another billet at Chart-ham, and galloped off, as if fearful of discovery : the servants said he looked like a gentleman, but did not say more than to ask if he was right. His billet was this :

“ IN-

“ INSTANTLY set out for London—take with you Joanna Doveridge—go to the Royal Hotel, Pall Mall, and wait there till you are asked for.”

“ *I cannot go,*” said Lady Armathwaite, when the Earl hastily read the injunction. “ My existence can be of importance to no one—the world was always my enemy, and I for ever have renounced it.”

“ You must not talk so, my Joanna,” said Mrs. Halnaby; “ I shall insist on your going. With your husband there can be no danger, and perhaps the happiness of some one else, if not your own, may depend on it. I will go with you.”

“ But what am I to do with my daughter?”

“ She will be very safe here; or you may take her with you.”

“ I had

“ I had rather take her—I shall be afraid of some mischief if she is left with the servants.”

The point was presently settled—the coach was ordered for an early hour in the morning. Mrs. Lewis was taken to attend the ladies, and by five in the afternoon the party were in Pall Mall, and Miss Byram was in raptures with the new existence she was introduced to.

Lady Armathwaite, disgusted with the bustle, and extremely fatigued with her journey, had retired after dinner to lie down. Mrs. Halnaby was sitting in her room watching her. Miss Byram was committed to the care of Mrs. Lewis, and lolling out of the two pair of stairs window to regale her eyes with the lamps and flambeaus, when Lord Armathwaite was told that two ladies and a gentleman inquired for him.

He

He desired they might be introduced.

Lady Cottisbrooke led the way; Peregrina in her morning dress, and with her veil down, followed in the expectation of nothing pleasant. Captain Courtland, all curiosity, brought up the rear.

Chairs being placed, the Earl begged the company to be seated; he looked earnestly at Peregrina's figure, but her veil was, by candle-light impenetrable, and his eyes returning to Lady Cottisbrooke, he said, "you are a stranger to me, Madam, may I know your business?"

"I could almost, my Lord, ask that question of you: I come here with this young lady, in consequence of a letter I received this morning." The Countess then produced it: he read it, and smiling, answered, "This seems the counterpart of that which brought me hither, which I will produce to you when we are a little better

better acquainted. On whose account pray am I honored with this visit ?”

“ On this young lady’s,” said Lady Cottisbrooke.

“ Then may I ask *you*,” said he to Peregrina, “ how I can assist you ? What is *your* business ?”

“ I come,” said she, throwing up her veil, and bursting into tears—“ I come only to ask if you knew my mother.”

“ Your mother ! Who was your mother ?”

“ Speak for me, Lady Cottisbrooke, for I cannot.”

Her Ladyship immediately related what she had learnt of Miss Lamorne, in their way to Pall Mall, which extended no farther than to inform Lord Armathwaite,

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that

that by accident she had heard that her mother, whom she supposed dead, was Joanna Doveridge ; that it was feared her conduct had been faulty, but that her daughter wished for every satisfaction respecting her memory.

“ I can give her none,” said the Earl ; “ there must be some mistake ; Joanna, the daughter of Lord Doveridge, had but one daughter, Elizabeth Byram, and she is now in the house.”

“ There can be no Elizabeth Byram but myself,” said Peregrina.

“ I will send to lady Armathwaite, if you please,” said his Lordship, “ or Miss Byram shall come to you.”

“ Your lady I am a stranger to,” said Lady Cottisbrooke ; “ she cannot, I suppose, say any thing on this business.”

“ If

“ If you are Lady Cottisbrooke, and I think I heard this young lady call you so, my wife is no stranger to you. Let me send to her.”

“ Did she know my mother ?” said Peregrina, crying.

“ Good God !” exclaimed Lord Armathwaite, “ what a strange misunderstanding ! Why, Lady Armathwaite was Joanna Doveridge—is that a secret ?”

“ Be cautious,” said Hamilton, “ Miss Lamorne is fainting.”

The door was opened, a sash was thrown up, and with almost equal tenderness on the part of her friends and the strange Earl, she was recovered.

Is my mother your wife, my Lord ? Did you say so ?” said she eagerly, but faintly.

“ I am sorry to say,” he replied, “ she cannot be your mother, but she was Miss Doveridge, then Mrs. Byram, now my wife.”

“ Then she is—indeed she is my mother.”

“ I will send for her—but pray, pray do not flatter yourself—you distress me extremely.” He rang the bell.

“ I do not flatter myself, indeed, my Lord,” said Peregrina, “ she must be my mother—I am sure she is my mother.”

“ What proof have you of it? I could almost wish it were so ; for upon my life I am interested in your distress, but it is impossible—O, here comes Lady Armathwaite.”

Peregrina had at the moment in her hand the miniature of her mother, which
she

she meant to produce as a proof; but on sight of Lady Armathwaite, whom she instantly recognised as her Margate friend, she rushed forward in a distraction of astonishment; the picture dropped on the carpet, and she stood motionless as a statue, while Lady Armathwaite, who had not yet been made acquainted with the arrival of the persons expected, with perturbed joy welcomed them as her former acquaintance, and in her weak state of health could scarcely bear even *this* shock.

Being seated on a sofa, whither Peregrina followed her, she began to make the usual inquiries; but finding Lady Cottisbrooke extremely at a loss for words, and on casting her eyes towards Miss Lamorne, whose hand she held, perceiving her in tears, she grew alarmed, and trembling begged to know what so agitated her.

“ O, you are my mother ; I am sure you are my mother,” answered Peregrina, reclining her aching head on Lady Armathwaite’s shoulder.

“ I, your mother ! my dear,” she replied, without emotion ; “ you have heard me say, indeed, that I wished it, but it is not my happy lot. What can have made you imagine it ?”

“ O, the picture ! the picture !” was all she could answer.

Lord Armathwaite had picked up the miniature, examined it by a light at the farther end of the room, and then withdrawn.

Peregrina was in agonies at missing him and the miniature : she could proceed no farther in her explanation, but raved for the picture ; and just as Lady Armathwaite, whom her violence terrified, had rung

rang a bell near her to inquire for the Earl, he entered, and requested to speak in private with the young lady. Hamilton insisting on being allowed to accompany her : Lord Armathwaite smiled at his circumspection, and permitted him to follow to the next apartment, where in great emotion stood Mrs. Halnaby. She kindly embraced Miss Lamorne, of whose errand she knew scarcely the outline, but tried to soothe her, as if she suspected a derangement of her intellects.

“ You are very good,” said poor Peregrina ; “ indeed I am rejoiced to see you ; but I am almost distracted—my heart will break, if I have not the picture again. Why did you take it away, Sir ? Pray give it me—my father gave it me when he died—he said it would tell me who I was.”

“ Good God !” said Mrs. Halnaby, in a low voice, “ she has lost her senses.”

“ Stay,” said Lord Armathwaite, as he seated himself in a chair next to that in which he had placed Miss Lamorne; “ be calm for your own sake, my dear young lady; here is your picture—keep it yourself, and be assured you are with those who will pay the utmost attention to what you say. Let me call for a glass of wine for you, and then you shall tell me as distinctly as you can, what you mean by saying Lady Armathwaite is your mother. She knows of no such daughter as you, though I am sure she would be proud to own you, for she often talks of you.”

“ She *must* own me,” said Peregrina sharply, “ for I am sure I am her daughter.” She then with great difficulty, having swallowed the wine brought her, gave a tolerably coherent account of all she knew of herself, and with inexpressible joy Lord Armathwaite owned her proofs substantial, though they fell short of ascertaining her identity. He told her that Lady Armathwaite’s

thwaite's injured state of health rendered every precaution that could save her spirits necessary : he repeated what he had before said of the Elizabeth Byram then in their family, and endeavoured to prepare her for a doubtful contest, to which he candidly owned his previous acquaintance with her merits, by his lady's report, and the interest he felt for her distress, made him with success : he then produced to her a small piece of written paper, which in the fall of the miniature picture he said had escaped from it. Peregrina could not believe it had any such contents.

“ I assure you on my honor,” said he, “ the picture opened ; the back separated on one side from the setting, and the paper is a certificate of your birth.”

“ I want no forgeries,” said Peregrina, “ to substantiate my claim. I ask only to be acknowledged, and then I will retire to the dependance I am, I see, doomed

to—I am sure Heaven will not permit me to be denied by my own mother.”

“ For my part,” said Lord Armathwaite, “ I with all my soul wish well to your cause, though I fear your vehemence, if you are right, will be almost fatal to my wife. If you suspect me of mocking you, only look at the picture, and when you are convinced it might contain this paper, I will shew you the contents.”

She took out the miniature, which in her distracted terror of losing it, she had dropped into her bosom, and she could not doubt Lord Armathwaite's veracity, when he taught her how to separate the parts, and she saw a space sufficient for the paper between the gold and the ivory. She now begged to see what was written, and finding it a full recognition of Elizabeth, as the daughter of Lambert Byram, and Joanna Doveridge, with the date of their marriage, and her birth, she exclaimed,

claimed, “ This then it was that my dear father told me would certify my birth,” and dropping on her knees, with streaming eyes and clasped hands, in frantic devotion she begged “ that he who left not himself without a witness, would regard the low estate of his handmaid, and plead her cause in the hearts of his creatures.”

Mrs. Halnaby, affected even to tears, could say nothing to calm her. Courtland, in universal tremor, spoke to her in accents of hope, while Lord Armathwaite, every fibre of whose heart, accustomed as it was from early days to suffering, was wrung by the energy of her character, could no otherwise be of service to her than by raising her from the ground, and beseeching her not to hinder her return to quiet, by giving way to such emotions. He observed to her, that her violence might be death to her mother, if she did not repress it, before he introduced her to Lady Armathwaite.

“ Then, my Lord, you *do* acknowledge me as the daughter of ———. O, Heavens ! I know not by what name to call my mother.”

“ You may call her very safely *my wife*,” said the Earl, endeavouring to cheer her by a smile.—“ Yes, from my soul, I do believe we have been grossly imposed on, and that Providence will restore us to happiness in restoring you to us ; but cease, my dearest girl—try to compose yourself, that I may take you to Lady Armathwaite, and hasten a solution of this mystery. While you calm your spirits, I will go and talk to your mother.”

“ *My mother !*” repeated Peregrina, as he quitted the room ; “ O, my dear Madam, even Lord Armathwaite himself, though the brother of cruel Lady Jemima, who would have buried me in the East Indies, even *he* says I have a mother. O, how proud I shall feel if I am allowed to
call

call her mother. I am sure Lady Armatwaite seems too good to be ashamed of me. I have never done any harm, though I know very little of the world. Where is the other Elizabeth? I suppose it is Miss Byram; poor thing! only think of being made to deceive; I dare say she was obliged to it. I hope my mother will not be unkind to her—she will be sadly punished at best—but I am sure my mother is too good to take any advantage of her—my mother—O, my mother! Captain Courtland, indeed you are very patient with me and my folly—but only think what it is for me, who never knew I had a mother, to find mine now.”

Hamilton would have expressed his sympathy, but her tongue was not to be stopped. “My dear Mrs. Halnaby,” said she, “I distress you; but I cannot help it—indeed I am very happy; for I am sure my mother will be convinced. But, O gracious heaven,” said she, sinking in her chair;

“ it is almost too much for me.” She then became quiet, and her tears, which Mrs. Halnaby could neither herself try to stop, nor permit Courtland to remonstrate against, relieved her.”

While she was thus exhausting her spirits in the agitation of her mind, Lady Armathwaite remained in a fullen opposition to every idea Lady Cottisbrooke would have awakened : she had been so long habituated to the misery of considering Miss Byram as her own daughter, that she seemed to prefer the evil she was acquainted with, to a hope that might at last deceive her ; but when Lord Armathwaite rejoined them, and to her questions about the frantic girl, answered, that her prepossession deserved consideration, and that he began to suspect very foul play on the part of Lady Jemima, she earnestly begged that she might not be tortured with suspense, or deluded with a vision of unreal happiness.

The

The Earl then coolly related what Miss Lamorne had reported of herself; and frequently reminding her that nothing yet could prove her identity, he cautiously communicated the circumstance of the picture, and remarked, that at least Miss Byram, who it was pretended was best entitled to her father's kindness, had no such testimony to shew.

“ But it may be her right, and surreptitiously obtained from her.”

“ Do you not think, with such a temper as her's, you would have heard of the outrage ?”

“ She might not know of it ; I am ignorant of the circumstances of Mr. Byram's death, and previous illness — frequent frauds have been practised. If this young woman, Miss Lamorne, has any connexion with the family, she must be Mr. Byram's, and your sister's eldest daughter ;
and

and I have little doubt that she is so, and has escaped from the care of her friends; for you know Lady Jemima told you, when she gave up Elizabeth to you, that her own daughter had been kept in the north, that she was called Elizabeth, and that she was in person and abilities what could be wished. I believe too, that Mr. Byram died at his country house, where I suppose this girl then was. I have little doubt therefore that she is your sister's daughter, and I wish I could persuade myself she had been the person deceived, for then I should think less ill of her than I do now. She must be a very bad young woman, and I dare say well merits the character you had of her; though I think had Lady Jemima been as little partial to *my* daughter, she would have been more just. Miss Lamorne, or Miss Byram, or whatever she chuses to call herself, is a very beautiful and a very charming young woman, but she must be very deceitful, and I have only to repent the accident that brought me acquainted with her."

“ Will you see her yourself?” said Lord Armathwaite.

“ I had rather not, for it distresses me ; but if you wish it, I can have no objection.”

His Lordship waiting for no other permission, fetched the exulting Peregrina, whom Courtland and Mrs. Halmaby followed, not doubting that they were called to the delightful scene of her acknowledgment.

CHAP. XV.

BUT Lady Armathwaite was inflexible; and when Peregrina on her knees intreated only her maternal benediction, she with averted eyes, and in convulsed agitation, begged that she might be released from an importunity her spirits could not bear, and her judgment could not sanction.

“ Surely,” said Lady Cottisbrooke, “ this is unjust prejudice. I do not say that Miss Lamorne’s identity is yet proved, but if I may judge of her from my acquaintance with her, and I have seen her in some trying situations, she is incapable of deception, and merits the utmost respect and esteem. I must not see her so treated: I am her voluntary guardian: she

she relies on my care, and justice *shall* be done her. If I had found her crafty, designing, or selfish, I might suspect as your Ladyship does, but she is an artless girl, and excepting the singularity of her having some presiding friend whom she corresponds with, and who I believe is not known to herself, I never saw any mystery about her that was not to be resolved by the misfortunes of her life, and that was not excused by the delicacy every one must feel, whom the hand of necessity depresses from their natural situation."

"I would not be thought pert," said Courtland, "nor does it become me, in my situation, to make the nature of my interest for our amiable friend a doubtful point; but it behoves me in her present distress, when I see her really treated with severity, to vindicate her, as far as my knowledge will enable me, from the suspicions which I learn from my mother have been cast on her. My acquaintance with Miss
Lamorne

Lamorne gave rise to a very tender regard for her, which I inconsiderately avowed. She was then, in her own judgment, entirely dependent on our family ; and my view was, I confess, privately to have married her, and risked all consequences. I knew that I possessed her friendship and her good opinion, and I hoped that this, together with the precariousness of her comforts, might induce her to listen to me. She honorably consulted my mother, who, attached to her by her uncommon merit, and too earnest for my happiness, would have made any sacrifice to have brought about our union ; but Miss Lamorne herself opposed it, lest her want of fortune might distress my family : she quitted my mother's house to lessen my uneasiness : she most disinterestedly recalled me from an error into which my passion for her had led me ; and I may say, she has sacrificed her interest to her idea of justice. What were my secret reasons for relinquishing her, I am not at liberty to divulge,

divulge, — she is ignorant of them :— but can such a young woman be suspected of fraud ? the *man* that intimates it must prove it to *me*.”

“ I am very willing to suppose,” said Lady Armathwaite, “ that Miss Lamorne has been deceived—she has been brought up under a false description—she may be, I grant, Lady Jemima Byram’s daughter, but she is not *mine*.”

“ Lady Jemima’s !” repeated Peregrina ; “ *I*, Lady Jemima’s daughter ? I am sure she would not say it.”

“ But she has intimated it, my best friend,” said Lord Armathwaite mildly to her, “ you will therefore admit that there is some difficulty to be overcome. When I went, about a year ago, to inquire after Elizabeth, the daughter of Mr. Byram, by his first marriage, my sister, Lady Jemima, told me, and I am sorry to be obliged

obliged to mention it, that the perverseness of her own daughter's,—her eldest daughter's temper, had induced her and Mr. Byram to make an exchange; to educate Elizabeth as her daughter, and to send her daughter into the country as Elizabeth."

"And who," said Peregrina, with uplifted hands and eyes—"who could believe Lady Jemima? Was it likely she would thus renounce her own daughter?"

"As likely," said Lady Armathwaite, "as that she should, as she must in the other case have done, renounce her daughter to me, which I am as little inclined as you can be, to suppose any mother would do."

"Come, my dear Madam," said Peregrina, weeping, and going up to Lady Cottisbrooke, "I must still be a burden to you; take me away, I beseech you; I
expected

expected cruelty, but not from Lady Armathwaite."

Lady Cottisbrooke rose indignantly to go.

"O, dear! dear!" said Mrs. Halnaby, "how distressing all this is! Sure, my Joanna, you are too hasty; why do you not send for Miss Byram?"

"Send for her, if you please," said Lady Armathwaite; "she can tell you nothing more than that she believes her name to be Elizabeth Byram."

"But she would know Miss Lamorne," said Mrs. Halnaby.—"I will fetch her."

"You must not tell her your errand," said Lord Armathwaite.

Mrs. Halnaby departed. Lady Cottisbrooke and her son tried to raise Peregrina's

grina's hopes ; and she was beginning to expect justice from Miss Byram's lips, when Mrs. Halnaby returned in the utmost consternation, and said Miss Byram was not to be found.

Lady Armathwaite, conscious only of the present distress, rang the bell furiously, and inquired for her servant.

Mrs. Lewis entered, with her apron at her inflamed eyes, and sobbing violently, she declared she knew nothing of Miss : she had only left her to fetch her a glass of water, and returning up stairs, she lost her way, and before she could find it, Miss was gone.

The house was instantly in an uproar ; no one could give the smallest account of the missing lady. Lady Armathwaite could only repeat, that she was certain some interested person had taken Elizabeth out of the way ; and Lady Cottisbrooke perceiv-
ing

ing the effect this suggestion was likely to have on Peregrina, instantly prepared to leave the house with her. She told Lord Armathwaite she should send early in the morning, in hopes of hearing Miss Byram was found ; and he, inclined to blame his lady's inflexibility, offered to call in New Norfolk-street, to talk the matter further over. The proposition was gladly accepted by Peregrina's friends, but she herself was almost out of all condition of understanding it. Captain Courtland lifted her into the coach, where she remained, unable to resist its motion, and nearly in a state of torpor, till she stopped at Lady Cottisbrooke's. She was then lifted out by Hamilton and one of the servants, and carried to the drawing-room, where her stupor still continuing, in spite of every endeavor, she was soon conveyed to her chamber, where Lady Almerina, no longer influenced by a distinction of rank, or her own superiority, herself undressed her, and
 passed

passed the night in very meritorious endeavors to mitigate her grief.

Without the aid of sleep, and far more indebted to her own natural good temper, and her moral excellence, than to any argument even the novel kindness of Lady Almerina could enforce, she was tolerably calm by the morning; and when Lady Cottisbrooke at her first rising, came to make anxious inquiries, and to offer her every consolation in her power, she found her rational and resigned, though extremely dejected and exhausted by the agitations of the preceding evening.

“ I have got a letter for you, my love,” said Lady Cottisbrooke; “ but as I have not presumed to open it; I am almost afraid of its contents. Mrs. Blyford’s man, who was at the door when it came, says the messenger was the same that accompanied you part of the way to town.

Peregrina

Peregrina raising her head from the pillow to look at the direction, knew the hand to be that of Ami Bonange ; and with trembling impatience read to herself these words :

“ I AM sincerely grieved for yesterday evening’s success—I meant it better—I tremble for the consequences of your disappointment. My heart bled when I saw you lifted into your carriage.—But be comforted, my Peregrina—all may yet be well. I have traced out Broome, who married your father and mother—for *I* have no doubts : I am now going to fetch him up from his living. Let me conjure you to wait patiently ; for though you may imagine that Broome’s testimony can go no farther than to proving the marriage, I have heard lately of such proceedings at Byram Park, as convince me he is, without knowing it, promoting your interest.

“ I dare not say, for *my* sake be at peace ; but certainly till you forbid my hopes, I may assure you, that should the whole world rise against you, you shall ever find an unalterable friend in

“ AMI BONANGE.”

A little comforted, though still suspicious of all comfort, she left her bed, and prepared to receive Lord Armathwaite, who at an early hour was with them.

“ How is my mother, my Lord ? How has she passed the night ?” were her first questions.

“ Do not, my dear,” said he, “ indulge yourself in suppositions that it will be painful to correct. My wife is far from well to-day ; but Miss Byram was presently found last night ; she had, for she is a terrible girl to manage—she had got out for the childish pleasure of looking into the street, and a gentleman in the house, who
had

had been so kind as to go out in quest of her, soon brought her back : she must be watched like a prisoner. But I am sorry to say that I am disappointed in a hope I had conceived from the ill-will she has always appeared to me to bear us. I really did think she would gladly have owned any thing to get away ; but she steadily persists in it, that she is the person you think yourself."

" Well," replied Peregrina, " I rest content—I had rather be the sufferer than the deceiver ; and if the proving my identity is so painful to my mother, I would rather remain in dependence and obscurity all my life."

" You deserve a better fate," said Lord Armathwaite, turning from her to hide the expression of his features ; " I shall not fail to tell Lady Armathwaite how amiable your conduct is."

“ Do you think,” said Peregrina, “ my Lord, that if Lady Armathwaite can be convinced I was not accessory to the fraud, even should I be found in the wrong, she would forgive me, and allow me occasionally to see her, for it would be a very great pleasure to me ?”

“ I will certainly mention your wish, and you may depend on my best offices.”

The matter was then discussed fully. The Earl was still disposed to belief, on the evidence of Peregrina's merit ; and perhaps not a little influenced by her personal recommendations, and the comparison between her and the reigning princess. With the kindest expressions, and at least a suspended judgment, he left Miss Lamorne to ruminate on what had past, and to puzzle herself to find out how Ami Bonange could see her come away from Pall Mall the night before.

And

And now the yet unexperienced heart of Peregrina felt in all its force that native sentiment which renders the approbation and protection of the one sex, as the most requisite, the most valuable possession of the other. On Ami Bonange, whosoever he might be, for unworthy of her trust she could not think him, she still in all its storms reposed her oppressed mind. She knew herself not destitute of a most powerful friend: she knew all his actions to be guided by that which gave them half their value, a sincere affection, not such a passion as could degrade her, or as she needed to fear, but one that had for its aim her happiness, and which, so far from endangering the moral sense in which she had been so strictly educated, was the best fitted to encourage her against the evils of this life, and to fortify her against its delusions. She thought, that though Lady Armathwaite should prove inexorable, and should Lady Cottisbrooke's family arrangements oblige her to decline her protection,

as she imagined must be, when the Earl returned, that should Martha Blyford overcome her scruples, and on becoming Courtland's wife forget her, still when once Ami Bonange should avow himself, she could bear her misfortunes.

Had not the intimation in his billet prohibited her, she would gladly have committed the effusions of her heart to paper for his perusal; but not knowing how to address him with any certainty of success, she amused herself in writing to Mrs. Blyford a detail of her woes, for her man, who was to set out the next morning, to carry to her. She had just sealed her letter, when Lady Cottisbrooke came to her, and no longer able to postpone her maternal interest, she spoke to her at large on the subject of Martha Blyford, and the chances of Hamilton's success.

She—and surely if it was a fault, it was a venial one, saw her younger son's merits

rits in a light that reached not the defects Peregrina thought she had observed in his character : the versatility she herself had ascribed to him while at Margate, seemed now forgotten, though she could no longer fancy Miss Lamorne had fixed his wandering heart. Her Ladyship appeared to think her dear Hamilton could not err, at the same time that her language implied a censure of his passion for Peregrina, who, however, little inclined to heap odium on one to whom she was certainly very highly indebted, could not compliment the steadiness of his partialities.

Concerning Martha Blyford, she very frankly gave her opinion, saying as her heart dictated, whatever could make Lady Cottisbrooke wish well to Hamilton, in his application to Miss Blyford ; she could not disapprove the plan proposed, which was that of Captain Courtland's seeing Mr. Blyford on the business, at the first opportunity ; nor could she help admiring Ha-

milton's humble penitence, when on joining them, and questioning Miss Lamorne on the mischief he had done, and was in agonies to repair, he declared himself ready, if his profession was the objection, to part with his commission. His mother drily asked him, if he would not go one step farther, and turn Quaker; but he assured himself that this would not be required, and hoped that one sacrifice on each side would bring them to an agreement.

In a gloom of the most distressing anxiety, which nothing but a visit from Lord Armathwaite relieved, passed Sunday and Monday, in which time Joanna, still dreading farther imposition, rejected every offer of conviction from argument, and seemed more than ever to set her heart on Miss Byram, who, better tempered than usual, condescended to coax her into a compliance with all her wishes. Accompanied by Mrs. Halnaby, who could refuse nothing to Joanna, she was permitted to spend the

the morning of Monday, and a limited sum of money, in the pursuit and purchase of trumpery; and in the evening Lord Armathwaite, whose love for his wife would not allow him to hesitate, under certain restrictions on the young lady's dress, language, and deportment, mortified himself by taking her to the theatre, while Joanna listened to Mrs. Halnaby in silence, or controverted with hopeless steadiness the possibilities she adduced.

CHAP. XVI.

DISTRESSING as was the situation of poor Peregrina, thus rejected, where she had placed her hopes of experiencing the untasted pleasures of maternal tenderness, and anxious as were all her friends for a decision in her favor, none of her or their sufferings were to be compared to the suspicions, the misgivings, the terrors, the despair, that lacerated and corroded the hearts of Lady Jemima and her party. The curate had been compelled to write to Mr. Broome, by the first post after his departure, to urge his return by the appointed Saturday. The Duke and his son were, in a civil way, watched like suspected persons, lest by any means unpleasant tidings should reach their ears.

Of

Of Sir Clifford there was little danger, for he as yet did not leave the house, and all his letters were properly examined; but the greatest of all miseries consisted in the mutual suspicion the party entertained one of another. Lady Jemima suspected from Laffiter's reluctance to produce the will, even to her, that it was not quite of the tenor he described: he was not without suspicions that his right honorable wife, who he perceived lent no unwilling ear to the smooth compliments of the widower Duke, might, under his protection, and in possession of secrets ruinous to her husband, oppose herself to his interest, and become a formidable enemy. Both feared some violent disturbance on the part of Arabella, whose good understanding with Mr. Charles Grubb was now a secret to none but those whom it most concerned: they imagined, for they did not believe it her intention to carry the farce to the church, by suffering the ceremony to be read there, that she relied on Sir Clifford's

partiality for her, and had it in contemplation to throw herself on his mercy ; and if she was married to Grubb, it was thought not unlikely that she might procure a fresh will, accommodated to her circumstances, and utterly subversive of that the other legates, for reasons best known to themselves, so highly approved of.

The fears of Arabella must be confessed still better founded, and her dangers more to be apprehended. She knew it to be in the power of her mother to ruin her, and she could not give her credit for forbearing, should opportunity present itself. She bore no great good will towards Mr. Lassiter, with whose near relationship to herself she was not acquainted ; but she could not doubt from his forced civilities to her, that he considered her as a rival in Sir Clifford's favor, whom he would gladly remove if it could be effected without danger to himself ; and being aware of his privity to her deception, she
hated,

hated, while she sneaked to him. Mrs. Browne, though not quite so deep as the rest in the plot, had penetration enough to see on how slight a basis of deception it was supported, and feared all parties, even down to Mr. Charles Grubb, who was at present extremely sociable in the house-keeper's room, but who passing still there for a gentleman of distinction *in his way*, and with Miss Byram for a *real* gentleman, in his turn feared, and every day expected his downfall.

There was but one sentiment in which they all agreed, and that was in the utmost dread of Mr. Broome, who, quiet in his deportment, humble in his manners, timid in his temper, and endued with little beyond plain good sense, improved by learning, and made valuable by thorough integrity, was yet, though the easiest depressed, the least likely to be shaken from his duty. Of this seemingly powerless being, who, shunning the world and its cabals,

cabals, could have lived ten years in a village without knowing the faces of the inhabitants, and who, in the general course of things, detested all inquiry into the transactions of his neighbors, who, in the abstraction of his studies, might have been made to believe any thing of the fashions of the world,—did a *gang*, for they deserve no better appellation! of the most crafty, deep-witted impostors, all aiming at their own separate interests, and practising on a man the most easy of all the creation to be duped, stand in awe! and to the destruction of their peace and rest did they guess at his movements, and endeavour to fortify their omnipotence against his imbecility.

Mr. Broome had got about thirty miles on his way towards London, when a young gentleman in a post-chaise, but unattended by a servant, inquired for him at his house, and hearing he was gone to town,

town, obtained a direction for him, as if designing to follow him. While he waited for a fresh carriage and horses, he asked many questions of the servants respecting the family at the Park ; and then declining to leave his name or business, he, by favor of a clear moon, set off again by the way he came.

Broome and Dennis getting safe to town a little after midnight, took up their abode at an inn in Oxford Street, and not expecting any inquiries after them so early, thought not of the genteeler coffee-house to which letters were to be forwarded, till the evening.

The day was spent in quest of lawyers, and after a variety of advice, it was decided that the best test of Miss Byram's claim to the honors she enjoyed at Byram Park, would be to court opponents by a public advertisement, for the
production

production of Elizabeth, the daughter of the honorable Joanna Doveridge.

On coming in the evening to his coffee-house, Mr. Broome was told a gentleman, who had almost every hour of the day inquired for him, was then waiting up stairs. Broome, never passionately fond of strangers, would have got some previous information before he introduced himself, but the gentleman had no peculiar marks, and the parson rubbing his shoes on the mat at the foot of the stairs, could only protest that he was a horrid dirty figure to see a stranger, and bolted forward to stun his rising timidity, leaving Dennis with a strict charge to drink nothing till he saw him.

Their conference, it is to be presumed, was important, for it lasted, notwithstanding Broome's fatigue, till the clock had struck one in the morning, when they parted,

parted, with a promise to meet again at ten o'clock : the strange gentleman in no way divulging who he was, or how interested in, or even acquainted with the business of Mr. Broome's journey ; but giving him every information he was in quest of, respecting Joanna Doveridge and her daughter.

CHAP. XVII.

AFTER Lady Cottisbrooke's hint at the mysterious intercourse of Peregrina, with her *good genius*, it was become almost necessary to inform her of its nature; and as it was on Ami Bonange alone, that her nearly expiring hopes depended, she found it impossible, without a much larger share of hypocritical prudence than she possessed, to be any longer reserved on the subject. She, therefore, suppressing only the flattering opinion her *incognito* friend entertained of her, and his consequent predilection in her favor, described to the Countess the correspondence that had subsisted between them, not without hope that she might either guess or betray to her to whom she was so greatly indebted; but

Lady

Lady Cottisbrooke declared herself totally ignorant, with a degree of seriousness that could not be questioned.

Some regimental orders, received late on Monday night, obliged Captain Courtland to set off early the next morning to join his corps on the western road. Considering the situation of suspense in which he left Miss Lamorne, interesting to all, and beloved by all, he felt this necessity as a mortification, which nothing alleviated but the hope that before he returned, he should be able to see Mr. Blyford, on whose acquiescence he with more steadiness than Peregrina's opinion of him had prognosticated, seemed to rely for the future quiet of his mind.

He set out, before it was light, and while the ladies were at breakfast by themselves, a smart knock at the street door awakened their attention. Lady Cottisbrooke was all ear for a message from
Pall

Pall Mall: Peregrina, though the hour, for the time of the year, was early, could not forbear fancying it was the post with a letter from Ami Bonange, whose last billet had taught her to suppose him somewhere in the country. How were they all disappointed, for even Lady Almerina had learnt to be interested, and Lady Effex, who could just comprehend Peregrina's distress, was ever ready to sympathize; how difficult was it to put on civil faces, or for Miss Lamorne to suppress the exclamation, "You tiresome creature!" when Sir Edward Bergholt was announced; and as if disposed for a morning's lounge, in spite of Hamilton's absence, trifled with the two young ladies of the family till the tea equipage was removed.

To Peregrina, all visitors would have appeared intruders; for though her assuming cheerfulness, or bearing any farther part in the conversation than replying to half a dozen common-place queries,

was

was dispensed with, she felt as a painful restraint the loss of her privilege to sigh, and to repeat to Lady Cottisbrooke, who with unwearied patience listened to her, her conjectures, her few hopes, and her many fears.

Sir Edward's humor was so various, that it did not particularly strike her attention that he was perfectly coherent, and might with most people have passed for agreeable company. She had determined to quit the room as soon as possible, but forgot her resolution, when the servants having retired, and Lady Cottisbrooke having taken up her work, he very gravely asked her Ladyship if she had heard within a few days of her friends in Devonshire Place.

“ The Haccombes, do you mean ? ”

“ Yes, have you seen them lately ? ”

“ No,

“ No, I ought to call there; but I have not taken any notice of them since Miss Lamorne left them, and I much question whether they have any greater wish to see me, than I to see them.”

“ Why, true, they did not, I confess, *shine* there. I believe you may spare the trouble of calling.”

“ Why so?”

“ Unless you and these ladies will do *me* the honor of a visit.”

“ Dear Edward, do not talk such nonsense; think of what you say,” said Lady Cottisbrooke, staring.

“ Nay, I have thought of nothing else; I say, if you will come and take a family dinner with me at *my* house in Devonshire Place, I will do the best in my power to entertain you; but you know bachelors
are

are not quite *au fait* in such matters.—I shall be quite at home on Thursday.”

Peregrina, to whom such rant was intolerable, left the room, and found relief she had never before experienced, in the pert colloquy of Mrs. Sarah Earle, who had spent the preceding morning, through the politeness of Lady Cottisbrooke's butler, in a visit of the Leverian Museum, the Panorama, and Mrs. Sylvester's incomparable wax work, and the evening at Drury Lane theatre, where she had *gazed* at the Wheel of Fortune, and *listened* to the pantomimic pageant of Alexander the Great.

She was in the room adjoining to that whither Peregrina had retired, and either unconscious or uncaring, she was giving to one of the house-maids, a full, true, and particular account of what she had seen.

The

The duck and her brood; the barn door fowl and its chickens; the *funny* ruffs and reeves, that looked for all the world like soldiers; the owl that put her in mind of a judge she had seen at the *'sises*; and the inferiority of the ostrich's feathers to those she used to wear when at home, were all that she retained of the ornithological part of the museum, except, indeed, the humming birds, which, trusting more to her misconception than her ears, she declared hummed so loud that you might hear them over the way. The toads and black beetles disgusted her, for she positively saw them crawl—the monkey-room was delightful, it was so droll and so natural: there was a hat made out of painted feathers that she longed for, she thought that turned up on one side with a colored bow, and a *côplicot* feather, it would be very nice: she saw a great stone made, she was sure, out of a peacock's tail, and diamonds, real diamonds! such as are picked out of oysters, as large as her two fists:

sists : there were some letters made out of little men, some real giants' heads, and a stable full of elephants, which her courage would not suffer her to look at.

The Panorama did not suit her taste, for having been once frightened on the water, her nerves were affected ; but she was really astonished how the sea, for the sea it was, and the water was salt, could come up to Leicester Fields : she supposed it ran at the back of the houses ; —she thought that river had been the Thames—at least so she had been told.

But all the disappointments of these exhibitions had been atoned for in the wax-work, which was life itself—such noble figures !—such grand dresses !—such a quantity of jewels !—Oh, it put her so in mind of herself when she was young, and used to go to Reading assembly.

The comedy she did not much relish—there was no love in it—not one of the actors made love—no, no, it was not like *Romo* and *Julet*, that was the play to her mind ; O, Romo ! Romo ! and then all about the little flars ; but here was, she was sure, some sad mistake ; she could not think it was the right play she had seen, for the deuce a bit of a *wheel* was there in it, though it was called the Wheel of Fortune. The pantomime delighted her, she could almost have sworn they were real people, and live horses, only she knew that a *pantomime* was always acted by *poppets*.

Peregrina had listened near half an hour to this oratorical description, which seemed to enrapture the house-maid, and had almost extorted a smile from her own unnerved countenance, when she heard a stir in the house, which made her suppose Sir Edward was going, and presently Lady Essex came to her, desiring her to go down,

down, as she was waited for in the drawing-room : her Ladyship could give no other account of her message, than that her mother had left the room for some minutes with Sir Edward, and on her return had sent her ; and Peregrina, alive to every probability of relief, immediately obeyed the call ; but on going where she was directed, found only Sir Edward Bergholt.

He prevented her retreat, by coming forward to meet her, and excused his wish to speak to her, by her having quitted the room so suddenly, when he was beginning to relate what he was anxious she should hear. She was surprised, and not greatly pleased ; but good manners, and an habitual fear of irritating one whose reason seemed so easily shaken, made her sit down to listen.

“ I have appeared to you,” said he,
 “ ever since I had the happiness of seeing
 N 2 you

you first in Devonshire Place, under a very strange light ; and I should be extremely hurt, were it not in my power to explain my conduct. Suffer me to tell you what has been, and what is my situation."

" I can have no interest in it, Sir Edward," said she, half frightened ; " I have always respected and pitied you."

" But you must hear me. Do not be alarmed—you will see me no more the frantic creature I have been—I may be dull—I may be tedious, but you will contribute to my peace if you will hear me."

" Certainly I will ; but may not Lady Cottisbrooke hear you too ?"

" She has heard, and permits me to speak to you."

" Then

“ Then I will attend ; but I am incapable of all judgment.”

“ Let me first of all explain to you the circumstances under which I came under Mr. Haccombe’s care. My father was an early friend of his, and possessing a heart much too warm for his confined experience to manage, committed himself and his affairs wholly to the guidance of Mr. Haccombe, of whose prudence, knowledge of the world, and thorough integrity, he had an enthusiastic and very ill-founded opinion. He had married when very young, and while entirely dependent on his father, a young woman, who in her situation and connexions was far beneath him : she died, and he went with Mr. Haccombe to the Indies, whence he returned but a few years ago, to take possession of the large property my grandfather’s will had bequeathed to him. It was my misfortune, owing, I believe, to a strong resemblance to my mother, whose

memory, though dear, was painful to him, to be disliked by my father; and it was to a very distant relation that I was indebted, in the early part of my life, for a school, and afterwards for an university education. This relation could leave me nothing, but as she died just at the time when my father became rich, he so far noticed me as to make me a decent allowance, which enabled me to live among my friends.

“ About eighteen months ago I lost my father, and as my conduct had never offended him, I expected to find myself my own master, and in possession of my grand-father's property. Judge then what was my surprise and indignation, when I found that Mr. Hacombe had made use of his unlimited influence over my father, to make him postpone the term of my being of age, to my attaining my twenty-fifth year, till which time I was not only to be his ward, but, usually, resident in his

his house; and added to this cruel condition, I was, before the conclusion of my twenty-fifth year, to marry, or contract a marriage, and with Mr. Haccombe's consent, or else to forfeit the whole of my patrimony, in trust to Mr. Haccombe, for charitable uses. I am convinced that this will was dictated by my guardian; but that it was not quite what he wished to have made it, for it appears evidently to me that he designed himself as my father's heir, but was fearful of going too far, lest his villainy should be discovered.

“ It was my good fortune to have some hints given me that put me on my guard. I heard that Haccombe's wealth was not acquired when he left the Indies, but derived in a great measure from my father's friendship towards him, and I had such proofs of his nefarious conduct, as might for ever have blasted his character; but dreading the procrastination of the courts of law, I preferred waiting the eighteen

months of my minority, in which time I did not doubt that Mr. Haccombe would entangle himself in his own net, and by some oversight, give me such an advantage over him, as would enable me to bring him to *my* terms ; but the vexation I endured, preyed on my constitution, and brought on a fever, which endangered my life.

“ Imagining me sometimes asleep, sometimes delirious, and at last beyond all power of attention, Mr. Haccombe and his niece, who had been sent for in a hurry, on my becoming one of the family, and who was on a sudden much recommended to my notice, were occasionally less discreet than they should have been in their conversation ; and I learnt that a match between Mrs. Barnby and myself was the grand point aimed at to secure my property, and to prevent all retrospect of accounts.

“ I had

“ I had every reason to believe that my proposed plan of forbearance would be at last the most successful I could adopt ; but there were particular circumstances that made me abhor the necessity I found I should be under of bearing the detested *courtship* of Mrs. Barnby. I therefore resolved to act, on my recovery, as if still under a mental derangement, which I thought must secure me from persecution, and might give me a better opportunity of observation.”

“ Is it possible,” interrupted Peregrina, very gravely, “ that your eccentricity was feigned ? How could you support it as you did ? you have really often terrified me.”

“ I know it,” he replied, “ and I have been sorry for it ; but as to the possibility of supporting an eccentric character, it is the easiest thing imaginable, though I confess mine was often very ill supported ;

and much of what you thought eccentricity in me, would now appear to you perfectly to coincide with the secret deportment of some of the family.

“ But this is all beside the purpose ; tomorrow Mr. Haccombe’s guardianship of me ends : the match with Mrs. Barnby has been proposed to me in form, and I have said, that if possible, I will on that day make her my wife. I know this to be impossible, for there is an insuperable impediment on her part, but lately known to me. It will be then in my power to overwhelm Mr. Haccombe with shame, and to make it his interest to conciliate my friendship.

“ And now,” added Sir Edward, after a long pause, which Peregrina, who felt deeply interested in his oppression, could not interrupt, even by a word ; “ forgive me, my dearest Madam, if I say that this flattering prospect of triumph over villainy,

lainy, and the acquisition of as large an income as commonly falls to the share of my rank, will lose all its value; nay, I know not whether it is worth pursuing, unless——for I feel too much to have any choice of phrase——unless you consent to share it with me. Of my own pretensions I can boast little—to your merits—to the angelic qualities of your mind, and to your possessing, under the most trying circumstances, a heart replete with excellence, mine bears its willing, its most honorable testimony—I distress you—I will be silent. I do not mean to solicit you in the language of passion, or the rant of adulation—I only wish you to take twenty-four hours to consider, whether with such a man as *you* have known me, you could be happy.”

“Your opinion does me honor, Sir Edward,” replied Peregrina, with assumed firmness; “it is pleasant to me that you approve my conduct—but to pre-

serve your approbation, I must be candid—I cannot do as you wish me—for—my affections are——engaged.”

“ Then I submit—but if it is not too great a favor to expect—I promise you to importune you no farther—may I but know the object of your choice ?”

“ You cannot.—It is a friend to whom I am attached by the greatest obligations.”

“ Obligation !—that is but a slender tie.”

“ Obligation has improved, I confess, into choice ; I owe him every thing—I have nothing but my hand and heart to give—for you know I am a very poor girl—he is content with these, and they are his.—Question me no farther, I beseech you.”

“ I will

“ I will not on this point—but in your refusal, so far I intreat you, repress or console my vanity, as to tell me my hopes were not chimerical.”

“ If you mean,” said she, smiling, “ to ask me whether, had I not been engaged, I should have listened to you, I will own, for you know I am very honest, that independent of the honor your proposal would have conferred on me, I believe I could have answered as you wished me—it was impossible, Sir Edward, to see as much of you as I have done, without entertaining the highest esteem for you—and I really should have been sorry to have vexed you.”

He rose in agitation. “ The God of Heaven bless you,” said he—“ shake hands—let us be ever friends—farewell.” And then he bounced out of the room, leaving her in a whirl of spirits.

On recollecting what had passed, she felt hurt at the necessity she was under of adding to the difficulties of a man so peculiarly circumstanced, so respectable and so amiable—but Ami Bonange's interests were not shaken by her regrets—she wished Sir Edward happy—she did not doubt his meeting with an amiable wife, when he himself had such pretensions.

CHAP. XVIII.

LADY COTTISBROOKE joined her with an inquiring countenance. Peregrina mortified her by saying, Sir Edward had, indeed, paid her the highest possible compliment, but that she did not find herself, in her present state of uncertainty, at all disposed to accept proposals of the kind. Her Ladyship was beginning to remonstrate and to argue, when a shrill voice was heard on the stairs, crying out, "Where is she? where shall I find her?" while the servants seemed endeavoring to stop some one from ascending.

Lady Almerina and Lady Essex coming out of the adjoining room to inquire the cause of the tumult, both the doors were
opened

opened at the same moment, and from that which led to the stairs, entered a woman of a decent appearance, and seemingly about forty years of age, who casting her eyes first on Lady Almerina, threw her arms round her, and began to weep in speechless agitation ; recovering her voice, at last, only so far as to iterate, “ My dear Miss—my dear, dear young lady ! ”

All inquiry was in vain. Another noise of a different kind was heard again on the stairs, and a voice of a deeper tone, in an authoritative manner, called out, “ Get a sedan chair instantly.”

Peregrina leaving the weeping visitor, went towards the open door, and met Lord Armathwaite, who in accents of trepidation said, “ Come, come instantly with me, your mother acknowledges you, and is in agonies till she sees you.”

The

The woman, perceiving to whom it was that Lord Armathwaite addressed himself, suspended her wailings, quitted Lady Almerina, and seized in a still more violent agitation on Peregrina, who struggled to get loose, imagining her a maniac, till the Earl bespoke her pity, by saying this was the person who had nursed her in her infancy, and who, frantic with joy at hearing of her, had run before him to embrace her. Peregrina returned her ardor with acknowledgments, and soon prevailed on her to let her share the joy she had occasioned, and to go immediately to her mother.

The chair was ready, and Peregrina had, in her impetuosity, scarcely articulation sufficient to beg Lady Cottisbrooke to follow her. She flew down the stairs: Mrs. Lewis, still crying, followed her, while Lord Armathwaite stayed only to urge Lady Cottisbrooke's coming. Claspings her hands with gratitude to Heaven, indulging

dulging her tears for a moment, and then choaking herself by their suppression, and beating her feet against the bottom of the chair through impatience, Peregrina, after a tedious journey, reached the hotel, a servant having been sent to escort her.

Nothing but her ignorance of the passages prevented her rushing forward, as soon as she quitted her vehicle: she saw none of the gazers; she heard none of their whispers; she was conscious of nothing, till she found herself stretched upon a bed, ~~gentle~~ ^{gentle} side of which Lady Armathwaite, pale and trembling, was sitting, with her arm thrown over her, while she one moment pressed her cheek with her lips, and the next gave way to Mrs. Lewis, who was trying to recover her. Mrs. Halnaby was seated in a chair by the bed, Lord Armathwaite at a little distance, smiled comfort on her as she opened her eyes, and catching her mother's hand, in
a faint

a faint voice she said, " Only once, I ask no more, call me your daughter."

" You are, indeed, my daughter, my most dear daughter," replied Lady Armathwaite. " Tell me you forgive my cruel doubts, and then may Heaven spare my life to protect you, and atone for what you must have suffered."

" Indeed, indeed," answered Peregrina; " I only *pitied* your doubts, my dearest mother—but do not agitate yourself—consider we are all happy now—I am very well—I can walk—I can get up."

" Then if you can, do, my love," said Lord Armathwaite; " for those to whom we are indebted for this unspeakable happiness, are waiting to see you."

She asked who they were.

She

She was told that one was Mr. Broome, the clergyman who had married her father and mother.

“ But he cannot know *me*,” said she. “ Pray do not, out of *pity*, say I am Elizabeth, if it is not proved to you.”

“ It is proved,” said Lord Armathwaite, “ by an old servant of your father’s, Dennis Geoghegan : he, notwithstanding Miss Byram’s consummate effrontery, and sure no girl ever had so much, says that he knew her from her birth to be Lady Jemima’s child : he has described you most accurately, and he says, so far is it from being true that you were exchanged, that till the death of Mr. Byram, you never quitted the country house : he has explained a most scandalous story my sister told me, highly to your honour : he says all Mr. Byram’s servants, many of whom he could find, would give the best account of you.”

“ O, I

“ O, I know Dennis,” she replied, “ he was very kind to me when my poor father died. But, my dear mother, pray be comforted—if you cry so, I shall be sorry you knew me.—And did *you* nurse me ?” said she, in a hurried voice to Mrs. Lewis.

“ I did nurse you, Miss,” she replied, bursting afresh into tears ; “ and it was my carelessness that was the beginning of all this mischief. Dennis and I were sweet-hearts, Miss, and he used to carry you about, and a base vile man—he stole you from us—a base man !”

“ Nay, Lewis,” said Lord Armat-hwaite, “ do not be so violent against him, he did it with the best intention—he was employed by his master, Mr. Byram. But come, my dear daughter, for I claim a share in you—I will go and tell Mr. Broome you are coming.”

His

His Lordship left the room: she rose, and cheerfully endeavored to detach her mother's thoughts from the past, while she returned the benignant rapture of Mrs. Halnaby by every demonstration of affection. She looked at herself in the glass—sighed at her faded roses and sunk eyes; and confessing honestly her reluctance to give even Mr. Broome an unfavorable impression of her, she delayed a few minutes, till by a little re-adjustment of her dress, she had composed her looks, and called up the smiles and the graces that used to play round her mouth, and sport in her eyes.

She then, linking her arm in her mother's, shewed herself in the adjoining room, where Lord Armathwaite would have presented her to Mr. Broome, but for the interposition of Dennis, who stepping forward, and bumping down on his knees, with no trifling noise, began to
howl

howl and cry, imploring her forgiveness, and extolling her beauty and goodness.

Not inattentive to the obligation she was under to this humble instrument in the hand of Providence, she heard with patience, and returned with acknowledgment the effusion of his joy and good will. To Mr. Broome she respectfully and collectedly addressed herself, relieving the benevolent agitation that marked his countenance, by expressing her gratitude for the sentiments it indicated.

Broome could scarcely restrain a still more womanish testimony to the correctness of his own feelings, when he saw what a creature it was that he was endeavoring to restore to her rights, and who now laying aside all the superiority her beauty and her importance justified, condescended in the language of gratitude to own herself his debtor. The same condescension from imperial lips would not so have

have delighted him ; the same words from a plain woman would not have been half so valuable.

Little having been said at present respecting the politics of Byram Park, they would, next after the dismissal of honest Dennis to his natural element, have been discussed ; but Peregrina's imagination was occupied by the supposed misery of Miss Byram, who had been kept totally in ignorance of what was passing. Lord and Lady Armathwaite relieved her good-natured apprehensions by a promise of lenity. Mrs. Halmaby interposed, “ Do what you will with her, so you get rid of her ;” and Miss was in gentle terms cited to appear.

Understanding only that there was company below, and one of the party a gentleman, she, after a little fidgeting at the glass, and a flight refreshment of her bloom, made her *entrée* in the usual *sub-*
dued

duced finery of her *matuline* habiliments. Peregrina panted with expectation on hearing her footsteps ; and prepared, not without affectionate pity, to alleviate, by a kind reception, her mortifying degradation ; but disgusted more than ever with her external, which perhaps it was only disuse that shewed in a state of aggravation, she could only extend her hand in silent civility, while her half sister, unable to retreat, though unwilling to stay, surveyed her with looks expressive of fear, doubt, and dislike.

“ You know that Lady ? Miss Byram,” said Lord Armathwaite, setting his eyes full on her countenance.

She had not hoped for the blessing of a question. She availed herself of it, and answered, “ No,” with a steadiness that might have been applauded, even at the Old Bailey.

“ Surely, Miss Byram,” said Peregrina mildly, “ you know me !”

“ It matters not,” said Lord Armathwaite, “ the young lady is already a papist ; and by all that’s good, if there is a convent in the world, she shall be locked up there ; for if she does not know you, she must then be Lady Armathwaite’s daughter ; and she shall no longer, while I live, remain here to plague her mother. Had she known you, and honestly confessed it, no severity, after what you have said for her, would have been thought on.”

“ Why, you ar’n’t going to *thut* me up in a convent, *becauth* I did not know that *Mith Elithabeth*—it *ith tho* long *thinth* I *thaw* her ; *thee ith* grown out of knowledge.”

“ Then,” said Lady Armathwaite and Mrs. Halnaby, both at once, “ you *do* now own her to be Elizabeth, your half sister.”

“ I

“ I *thuppothe*,” answered she, with a malicious smile, “ you *choothe thee should* be *tho*; and I am *alwaith*, *ath* they *thay*, for letting *folkth* have their own way: only tell me what I am to be done to; I *thuppothe* I am my own *mithtreth* now, and I *thall* be heartily glad of it; for I am quite tired of being a *thlave*.”

Lord Armathwaite turned from her in silent contempt. Peregrina would have endeavoured to soften the ferocity of her spirit; but she was called to more important matters; and Miss was sent out with Mrs. Lewis, for an airing. Lady Cottisbrooke came to share the general joy, just when Mr. Broome was beginning a statement of the impending events at Byram Park; and every one agreed in his opinion, that an immediate developement towards Sir Clifford should take place.

For this purpose he proposed returning home without delay: he knew by the let-

ter he had that morning received from his curate, that the compliment Sir Clifford's strict adherence to his light promise reserved for him, must procure him admission; and it was his resolution, at all events, to make use of it for the punishment of the wicked, and the vindication of the oppressed.

But as he owed no small grudge to the insolence of Mr. Laffiter, and the contemptuous craft of Lady Jemima, he wished much to surprize at the moment when he overwhelmed them; and for this innocent revenge he did not doubt, when once he had gained Sir Clifford's ear, he should obtain his sanction.

Unable to rest while his plan remained uncompleted, he and Dennis set off before three o'clock for Northamptonshire; it was his intention to procure an immediate audience of Sir Clifford, to send the result back to London by Dennis; on the receipt

receipt of which, if it proved, as could scarcely be doubted, favourable, the whole of the party were to follow; they would then be in the neighbourhood of the park, at latest on the Friday evening, and in admirable time for paying early congratulations to the bridal train.

How Mr. Broome became acquainted with the circumstances previously necessary to his introduction to Lord Armathwaite, not having been mentioned, Peregrina was left to her own conjectures, and they fixed on Ami Bonange, with whose beneficence, though still averse to disclosing her own sentiments, she wished her mother to be acquainted. She therefore gave his history, not without hope of some light on the subject; but, like Lady Cottisbrooke, her friends could only declare his guardianship “passing strange,” and the object of it very fortunate in meeting with so good a friend. Peregrina expressed her hope, that when her affairs were a little more settled,

he would avow himself, and receive her thanks.

“ There is no doubt of it,” said Lord Armathwaite; “ for as his guardianship must now end, it is not to be imagined, that for the sake of keeping an unimportant secret, he should renounce your friendship.”

“ Well,” said Mrs. Halnaby, “ my dear Miss Lamorne, (for I must please myself with recollecting you are such), I only beg, that when the gentleman unveils you will prepare yourself for what I am sure he will turn out—an elderly parson, in a great wig.”

Peregrina smiled; and Lady Armathwaite, with a sigh, answered, “ whoever he is, and whatever he is, I shall ever bless him for his goodness to my girl.”

“ And I shall love him,” said Peregrina, “ even if he is an elderly parson with a
great

great wig; for assisting to restore me to my mother."

" I grudge," said Lord Armathwaite, " to leave so pleasant a party; happiness is so new to us, that I am greedy of it: but I am indispensably engaged, and you must excuse me till the evening."

He then went away; and the ladies were left to interesting details, and satisfactory explanations. At Peregrina's request, Lady Almerina and Lady Effex were invited to spend the remainder of the day with them; and though the minds of the principal characters were still turbulent, all were happy.

In the evening Lady Cottisbrooke received a note from Sir Edward Bergholt, earnestly requesting her to use her influence with Miss Lamorne, and the party he understood her to be with, to grace his festive triumph the next evening, by being

present at Mr. Haccombe's. Lady Cottisbrooke and her family had already promised; Lady Armathwaite and Mrs. Halnaby did not object, but rather promoted his wish, having heard how he was situated; and Peregrina, much against her inclination, was obliged to acquiesce.

Before supper, Lady Cottisbrooke, with her young ladies, went home, having engaged the whole party to dine with her the next day. Soon after her retreat, Lord Armathwaite returned; they supped, and he then, with a grave aspect, addressing himself to his new step-daughter, talked to her on a variety of subjects respecting her present situation and future prospects. He endeavoured to fortify her mind against the not improbable obduracy of her prejudiced grand-father: he assured her most affectionately, that he would ever consider her as his own child; and he found no difficulty in reconciling to whatever might be her fate, one, whose happiness depended

depended solely on the being recognised by an affectionate parent, and the fidelity of a most disinterested friend.

The Earl, still grave, now offered to her consideration an affair of a very different and most unexpected nature. He named Sir Edward Bergholt as a gentleman of his acquaintance, and with whom he had just dined, and spent some hours in conversation. He said, that the notoriety of what had passed in the hotel, had occasioned his mentioning Miss Lamorne as well known to him; and he had gone so far as to avow his sentiments of her, and to repeat the substance of their conversation at Lady Cottisbrooke's that morning. He appeared to have stated even her refusal, but to have suppressed her reason for it; and Peregrina was extremely hurt when Lord Armathwaite declared himself his advocate, and begged her to reconsider his proposal.

She was distressed almost to tears, and replied only, “ that it was out of her power.”

Mrs. Halnaby said, “ that she knew and admired Sir Edward, and thought he should not be rejected on slight grounds.”

“ Have I,” said Peregrina mournfully, “ only found my friends to find them arbitrary ? Am I sufficiently known to be duly judged of ? I am sure my dear mother will not permit this.”

“ My dearest girl,” said Lady Armathwaite, “ I have no spirits to contest the point ; I can only say, that had Miss Byram been amiable, and you not discovered, Sir Edward Bergholt is the husband I should have fought for her ; and that my heart is set on your being his wife. My happiness will be incomplete without it.”

“ I would sacrifice my *life* for your peace, my dearest mother,” she replied,
with

with emotion; “but my *integrity* I cannot; nor would you, I am confident, permit it. I have told you very honestly how I have been, and am indebted to my unknown friend: but I confess myself wrong in having concealed from you that his letters of late have so far influenced my mind, as to make me wish, should he be found the unexceptionable man I believe him, to dedicate the rest of my life to his happiness. I will shew you his letters to-morrow; but Sir Edward ought to have told this, for I told it to him, though without naming Ami Bonange.”

“I approve of your idea,” said Lord Armathwaite; “and have only to excuse my precipitancy.”

“Obliged as you are, my love,” said her mother, “I cannot blame you—I give up, and will be content.”

“I only hope, said Mrs. Halmaby, he may not be elderly or greatly wigged. As

to his being a parson, we will forgive him."

Peregrina, who had expected much more opposition, was very grateful for the lenity she had experienced, and felt her mind discharged of a grievous burthen, now she had disclosed this grand secret of her bosom. Having paid a kind visit to the imprisoned Miss Byram, and found her still Miss Byram in nature as well as name, she waited Lewis's dismissal from the other ladies, to interrogate her on a thousand points; and, learning, after a variety of discourse, that the sudden meeting of the two domestics had renewed their former attachment, she took on herself the accomplishment of their wishes; and pleasing herself with the hope, that happy herself, she might now make others happy, she gratefully and piously recommended herself to Heaven; and, worn out with joy, resigned herself to sleep.

CHAP. XIX.

AWAKING the next morning to the delightful recollection that she had recovered her parent, and was surrounded by her friends, she felt no longer the orphan sensations that had obstructed hitherto her pursuits of peace; and with ecstasy she fancied, when presiding in high glee at the social breakfast table, that she saw returning health in the faintly-animated countenance of Lady Armathwaite.

The morning was soon passed in repetitions and felicitations; and as Peregrina was to dress at Lady Cottisbrooke's, the ladies went there at an early hour, leaving Lord Armathwaite to follow them.

On

On entering the house, a billet was put into her hand ; and her impatience to open it scarcely allowed of her attending her mother and friend to the drawing-room.— There, retired to a window, she broke the seal and read :

“ I have delayed no longer than was absolutely necessary the revelation I promised ; but, my Peregrina, what are my sensations at this moment ? You may dislike, you may reject me ! I must, however risque it. If, at nine o’clock this evening, wherever you are, (for that is not important to such beings as myself) you will signify to my spirit, by winding your watch, that you wish to see me, I will appear, and avow myself,

“ Your most devoted

“ AMI BONANGE.”

There being now no reason for concealment, except from the young ladies who
were

were not present, Peregrina read the billet aloud; and though she was somewhat startled at the supernatural style it was written in, her curiosity predominated, and she waited with impatience the hour of revelation, overlooking the disagreeable duty of civility she had previously to discharge at Mr. Haccombe's, where, notwithstanding Sir Edward's assurances to Lady Cottisbrooke, that the company of the whole party would be esteemed a compliment, she could not forbear fearing she must be an intruder, or at least a very unacceptable visiter. Neither had her good opinion of Sir Edward Bergholt's candour or sanity so far improved in the last four and twenty hours, as to increase her willingness to humour him. However, her mother would be with her, and she determined to feel bold.

Lady Armathwaite, expressing a great desire to see Mrs. Earle, she was sought for, and found locked up in a garret, whither,

ther, in hopes of escaping notice, she had retreated on hearing of the arrival of her former friend, *Joan*. Till assured by *Peregrina* herself, that she not only would not be hurt, but should be rewarded, she would not quit her fastness; but at length she was coaxed out; and, with a set of inconsistent airs of assumed fauciness and heartfelt humiliation, she followed Miss *Lamorne* to a room, where she knew Lady *Armathwaite* was waiting alone.

The benignity, the forgiving condescension, the cordiality of *Joanna*, would have re-assured her subdued enemy, had she possessed a heart to appeal to; but she had ever been selfish, and therefore could never appreciate the sentiments of others correctly; for she judged by that false standard, her own feelings. She had expected reproach and contumely; and, though she met them not, she could not but think they must come. She could put no other construction on the softness of *Joanna's* manner,

ner, than that she still was afraid of her, and confessed her original superiority : she heard no forgiveness in her voice ; she saw not the milk of human kindness on her lips ; she could not suppose that any one could gratuitously forgive a vanquished enemy—still harder was it to believe they could wish it : she knew not, for she felt not, how consonant to the uncorrupted structure of the human heart, are the amiable precepts of the gospel.

Had Joanna been of another temper ; had she too keenly felt, and unguardedly expressed her sense of former injuries, Sarah's tongue was ready to defend, and to retort : attacked only by the gentle weapons of tender remembrance and obliterated resentment, she had no defence or reply ; but, recalled from her stupor, by the donation of five guineas, and roused to recollection by Lady Armathwaite's assuring her, that, as the daughter of her guardian, she should be immediately exempted from
the

the necessity of servitude, she quitted the room with a reviving consciousness of her own importance, and went down to the housekeeper to remark how much Joanna Doveridge was altered by being a lady, from what she remembered her when she wore a stuff gown, and an apron made out of a printed one; and to console herself that people of family were always noticed by *their relations*, even if they had not had good luck in the world, provided they did not *demean* themselves.

Peregrina, who forbore calling Mrs. Earle to her aid, out of delicacy to her feelings, drest, with the assistance of another servant, and returning, as quickly as possible, to the drawing-room, entered it at the same time with Lord Armathwaite. She produced to him her billet from Ami Bonange, and consulted him on the possibility of getting away from Mr. Haccombe's in time. He satisfied her by saying he would take it on himself, and laughed at her

her apprehensions of some deception or alarm that should agree with the supernatural style of the note.

The carriages came at half past seven to take them to Devonshire Place; and Peregrina, still more disgusted with her errand, and more inclined to think she might meet with some affront, reluctantly found herself at the house that had afforded her pleasures so delusive: her fears, if not her painful recollections, vanished on entering the drawing-room, which was illuminated in the grandest style; and where Mr. Haccombe, Mrs. Barnby, in white satin and immaculate plumes; and Sir Edward Bergholt, in his never-abandoned black, received them as most welcome guests.

Mr. Haccombe paid his adorations to *Miss Byram* on her happy change of situation, and begged her particular introduction to her friends. Mrs. Barnby smothered her with kindresses, telling her, that

that nothing was ever so infamous as Mrs. Haccombe's conduct of late; that Mr. Haccombe had entirely discarded her, and designed to sue for a divorce; and that things were now quite on a different footing from what she had known them.

Tea and coffee were handed round, and Peregrina waited the arrival of other company, but none appeared; and she began to fear they were invited to a yawning party that must aggravate her impatience, Mr. Haccombe paying little attention to any body but herself; and Mrs. Barnby entertaining her guests only with intimations, which in good manners nobody could understand, that she was yet in an *unsettled* state.

Sir Edward sent his man down stairs for a bundle of papers, and then, bespeaking particularly the attention of Mr. Haccombe, he began:

“ I am

“ I am now, Sir, having attained the prescribed period of my minority, to return you thanks for whatever care you have exercised towards me or my property.”

“ Sir, I desire no thanks.”

“ I am, as I understand from the tenor of my father’s will, in the course of the ensuing year, to chuse a lady, and with your consent to marry her ; I, therefore, wish to know on whom I am to cast my eyes.”

“ Can you ask ? Sir Edward,” interrupted Mrs. Barnby, bursting into a fit of dry sobbing, and leaning on the end of a sofa, with her handkerchief at her eyes.

“ I certainly ought to ask, Madam,” replied Sir Edward, “ since still without Mr. Haccombe’s consent, I must not marry ; and I have not my option of a state of celibacy. I, therefore, ask Mr. Haccombe again, What lady am I to chuse ?”

“ I do not wish—I, I do not mean—I would not,” he replied, faltering and hesitating, “ direct your choice in so important a matter ; but, from what has passed between you, I should think that—my niece.”

“ Your niece !” repeated Sir Edward ; “ I knew of none you had—who is she ? where is she ?”

He waved his hand towards Mrs. Barnby.

“ *Is* that your niece ?”

Peregrina now fancied Sir Edward really insane ; but Mr. Haccombe’s changing countenance was his best vindication. He replied, “ I *acknowledge* her as such.”

“ But, Sir, you cannot *assert* her to be such.”

“ Sir,

“ Sir, do you dare dispute it?—what ground have you?”

“ To your first question I answer, that I dare dispute it with you or any man—to your second, that my ground is the having overheard a quarrel between your virtuous wife, and your still more virtuous *niece*; in which they spared not even their own reputations; for they thought me mad, and treated me like an idiot. But I wave the objection as to her relationship; it is of no consequence—you mean, I suppose, that lady.”

“ Certainly I do.”

“ Then, I demand to know her name.”

“ Lucy Barnby,” the lady vehemently replied for herself, in violent commotion.

“ I know no such person,” said Sir Edward; “ I know, indeed, *Molly Minns*; for
by

by the first, I understand, Madam, you were christened, and the last you acquired by marriage, about two years before you came under the protection of this gentleman, Mr. Haccombe. You were then, I think, not quite thirty years of age."

Mrs. Barnby would have left the room, but Sir Edward opposing her, Mr. Haccombe's courage rose, and he demanded his authority for this new calumny.

"You shall have it," said he, temperately, at the same time ringing the bell. He whispered his servant, who presently returned with a very rough-looking elderly man, seemingly of the *aquatic* tribe.

Mrs. Barnby on his entrance screamed "O, 'tis Jack Minns!" and burst into a flood of tears, which Jack not regarding, after a few astounding questions from Sir Edward, he took his Moll in tow, threatening her loudly with the cat-
of-

of-nine-tails; and, without any mercy to her fatten, or her plumage, dragged her off, protesting that she was fine enough even for Bermondsey Spa, or the St. Helena tea gardens.

“ I am now, I presume, then,” said Sir Edward, “ at liberty, Mr. Haccombe, to marry where *I* chuse.”

“ O yes, yes, undoubtedly—you have my full consent,” he replied, trying to get off.

“ No, stay, Sir,” said Sir Edward, “ you and I have still an account to settle—you know how you have wronged *me*: but that is nothing compared to the repeated injuries you have planned against, and offered to this lady, while you thought her defenceless and unprovided for. I insist on your making her every reparation.”

“ I will, I will,” he replied, pale and trembling, dropping on his knees ; “ I will ask her pardon—I will marry her, as soon as I am divorced.”

“ Marry her, indeed !” said Sir Edward ; “ profane her not by the idea—intreat her pardon”.

“ You have it, I assure you, Sir,” said Peregrina, wishing to end the scene.

The fallen emperor of the east stood again on his feet ; and, supporting his shaking frame by leaning on a table, seemed to await his doom.

“ I will not,” said Sir Edward, “ trouble these friends with accounts ; I only tell you, that these papers contain a full crimination of your conduct ; your infamous letter written to blast the character of Miss Larmorne, and to get her into your power ; which, an accident that you ought to have
 4 provided

provided against, the integrity of an honest man, put into my hands ; and here I have every proof of your monied villainy. Confess you have wronged me, and prove yourself for once not a liar."

" I do confess," he replied ; " I own I have now nothing but what is your's ; for my wife has been sadly expensive. I have not all your property to produce, part of it is gone ; but what remains I will make over to you, only let me go to the Indies again."

" Remain, then, a prisoner in your house," said Sir Edward, " till I am more at leisure."

A pause now ensuing, and Mr. Hacombe having retired into an adjoining room, where Sir Edward's man attended him to keep off the horrors, Peregrina considered the curtain as dropped ; and perceiving that it was within a quarter of

nine o'clock, she begged Lady Armathwaite to be going. They waited only the conclusion of a seemingly tedious explanation Sir Edward was giving the Earl and the listening ladies, respecting his discoveries in his character of a maniac; and Peregrina standing near the fire, with her watch in her hand, and fidgetting to be gone, saw, to her inexpressible vexation, the minute-hand complete its revolution. She begged Lord Armathwaite to go, or to suffer her mother to go with her. He said only, "your watch is too fast, I shall be ready in five minutes;" and she turned from him not much pleased with his negligence.

Recollecting the injunction of the billet, though almost too much out of humour to mind it, she wound her watch; and was glad to perceive the company by that time separating. Sir Edward went into the next room, and she earnestly begged they might not wait his return, as the incivility was to be

be excused under such circumstances ; but Lord Armathwaite seemed to dread a rude action more than an unkind one.

She was beginning to think of retreating secretly with Lady Almerina, whom she knew she could persuade ; for still she had no idea of seeing her friend any where but in Pall Mall, when the farther door was thrown open, and *Mr. Bonange* was announced.

CHAP. XX.

MR. BROOME and Dennis performed their journey without interruption; but, reaching their destination at an hour when a visit to Sir Clifford could not be thought on, they retired to rest; and about ten the next morning, Broome, whose anxiety had not suffered him to close his eyes, proceeded to the park, where, receiving a good account of the Baronet's health, but with it a civil and unwilling refusal to his request of admission, he firmly told the porter, that he knew it was not his master's wish, though it might be Lady Jemima's order, that he should be denied: that he had been written to in London to hasten his return on business for Sir Clifford; and that, as a friend, he could assure him, he would be
much

much more in danger of forfeiting his place by his obstinacy, than by his compliance.

This Cerberus not being by nature a growler, Mr. Broome prevailed on him, and going through the hall, he crossed on Arabella, who, in ecstasies at the sight of one so necessary to her happiness, assured him *grand'pa* was much better, and wanted very much to see him. She even took the trouble of introducing him ; and the parson trembling like an aspin leaf, found himself, without let or molestation, in the apartment to which Sir Clifford had removed from his bed-chamber.

The Baronet received him with frankness and cordiality, perhaps improved by the remembrance of the danger he had been in of a final separation from all his worldly connections : he stretched out his hand, and kindly reproached him with absenting himself, while Broome, strangled

by his feelings, could indicate his rationality only by the tears that started in his eyes.

Sir Clifford began with, “ Where have you been ?” He replied, “ In London, on business.”

“ Aye,” said Sir Clifford, jocosely, “ I fancy you have some great business in hand. I shall not be surprised if we soon see a fine London lady at the vicarage ; but first, my good friend, before I part from you again, you must clear my conscience of its promise to you, and tack my grand-daughter and this impatient strippling of a Marquis together. Mercy on us, they call that thread-paper of a figure a grown-up man ! They were not such *men* when I was young, Mr. Broome.—No, indeed ! we were flouter fellows.—Why, what’s the matter with you ? Am I rallying unreasonably ?—Forgive me,” added the old man, half rising in his chair ;

“ I fear

“ I fear you have been on some sad business—forgive me, for I would not for the world knowingly wound your’s, or any body’s feelings.”

“ My dear Sir,” replied Broome, blowing his nose violently ; “ I am sensible of your goodness—my spirits are so agitated I can scarcely speak—but I am not unhappy.—I depend wholly on your disposition to hear candidly and patiently what I come on purpose to say.”

“ You may depend on me—but you alarm me.”

“ I shall, I fear, alarm, and perhaps distress you ; but it is only to render you one of the happiest beings in the world.”

“ In *this* world, do you mean ?”

“ Yes—for I will put it in your power to be just and kind, and then I know you

will be happy.—Prepare yourself, my dear Sir, to hear strange things.”

“ I am all attention.”

“ You tell me, Sir Clifford, I am to have the honor of uniting the Marquis and your grand-daughter.—You will be surprised if I say it is out of my power.”

“ Why, you ungrateful—”

“ Stay—you said you would be patient. I mean no flight—the lady is already married.”

“ Married ! it is impossible.”

“ She *is* married—married to Charles Grubb, your footman.”

“ What proof have you of this ? Be careful, Mr. Broome.”

“ Here

“ Here is a copy of the register.—Nay, send, yourself, to the next parish, and you will find, though I believe Willes knows nothing of it ; his scoundrel of a curate, Franklin, married them, according to this date.”

“ You astonish me.—What is to become of me ? Does Lady Jemima know it ?”

“ I suspect she does—but it is of little importance.”

“ But what am I to do ? Will you see the Duke for me ?”

“ I will do any thing to serve you—but ——”

“ How shall I ever get the better of this disgrace ? O, how foolishly—how idiot-like I centered all my happiness in this deceitful Elizabeth !”

“ Stay, Sir—call her not deceitful Elizabeth—she is, I agree with you, *deceitful* ; but I deny that she is Elizabeth—*her* name is *Arabella* Grubb.”

“ Pshaw—hold your tongue, Broome, you are harping on the old string. If you have no better authority for your other assertion than for this, you must excuse me if I pay no regard to either.”

“ I ask you only to hear me, Sir, and then if you do not think as I do, I will marry the Marquis and your grand-daughter whenever you command it.”

Broome then proceeded with a circumstantial detail of facts, frequently pausing to give Sir Clifford time to recover from the extreme agitation of tottering belief, and still fond partiality. Incredulity itself could not have opposed his proof ; and poor Sir Clifford was forced to own he had very bad people about him,

him ; for Lady Jemima, he was aware, must have been privy to the deceit.

Laffiter having got intelligence of Broome's return, had posted to the Park in hopes of *ousting* him ; but to his mortification, Sir Clifford excused himself from receiving his visit, and Broome was not interrupted before he had painted to the old gentleman's reviving imagination, the excellencies of his real grand-daughter, and the respectability of those she was connected with. Sir Clifford begged earnestly that she and her friends might be instantly sent for, by an express. " O, hasten them, hasten them !" he cried ; " at my age, and with my infirmities, I may be dead before they come."

Broome delayed no longer than to plan with Sir Clifford the private introduction of the party to him the next day but one, when, fortunately, the bride-elect and her friends, including Laffiter, were to
dine

dine with the Duke in form. It was agreed that nothing should be divulged till Saturday morning, when just before the time of setting forward for church, where Sir Clifford insisted on having the ceremony performed, it was proposed to treat the company with a new species of electrical shock, to conclude with Mr. Laffiter's production of the will he had made, and his consequent dismissal from all credit. Broome then went home to send off Dennis; and Sir Clifford betook himself to meditation, Laffiter fearing, but no one suspecting the purpose of this extraordinary visit.

CHAP. XXI.

PEREGRINA'S eyes, fixed on the door, waited in staring eagerness the entrance of the person announced ; but her heart instantly sickened at the importance of what she had so earnestly longed for. She had, as we all do in ignorance, framed to herself an idea, of the correctness of which she was now to judge ; but what were her feelings, when instead of the stranger she had expected, the *incognito* friend she had so wished to know, she saw only Sir Edward Bergholt, from whom she would have turned away disgusted and disappointed, had not the circumstance of his being new-dressed, struck her as a singularity.

With-

Without being sensible of changing her place, she had got close to her mother, and had linked her arm within her's, as if fearing some magical deception. Sir Edward's countenance indicated more than his return to the business he had quitted : he saw her amazement, and coming up to her, he said with only an expressive smile, " Am I punctual ?"

" Good God," she replied, " Sir Edward, what can you mean ?—Surely——"

" Yes, surely," he replied, " you see in me your obscure friend, Ami Bonange, who has loved you, watched you, and endeavored to protect you, from the first hour of his acquaintance with you."

In silence, and scarcely conscious of her own thoughts, she turned to Lady Armathwaite, and sunk on her shoulder.

The Earl removed her to a seat, whither Sir Edward followed her, and when the encouragement of her friends, who seemed perfectly in the secret, had a little revived her, Sir Edward scarcely knowing how to construe her emotion, gently reminded her that he had now performed his promise, and offered to retreat for ever.

“ How can you be so cruel ? ” she replied, in a languid voice ; “ will you not allow me time to connect two ideas that have till now ever been separate in my mind ? How can I in a moment transfer the gratitude and affection due to Ami Bonange to Sir Edward, to whom I have ignorantly refused to listen. I should hate myself, could I for a moment hesitate in my conduct to so good a friend ; and I am sure in a very little time I shall feel very glad that I can avoid adding to Sir Edward’s vexations and ill treatment. Only let

let me go home now, and I will see you as early as you please to-morrow."

Her friends indulged her : in her way to Pall Mall she grew more composed, and was retiring to her chamber, without entering the drawing-room, when she was called back to hear of Dennis's arrival, and to see the very favorable account he had brought from Sir Clifford.

Sir Edward having appointed nine in the morning for being in Pall Mall ; the coach and a post-chaise were ordered for eleven, when it was arranged that Lord and Lady Armathwaite, Mrs. Halnaby, and Peregrina should go in the former ; Miss Byram, Mrs. Lewis, and Sarah Earle, in the latter.

After this adjustment, Peregrina, harassed by the rapidity of the day's events, retired to rest ; but to rest was impossible : she could think only of Sir Edward, and, though fatigued even when she rose, she
could

could think without reluctance of their expected interview.

She received him alone, and her heart, which pure integrity guided, had no disposition to exercise the usual privileges of tyrant beauty. She regretted only, that her jealousy of the rights of ideal Ami Bonange made her appear for the first moment indifferent to his embodied representative ; but for this he was inclined to make every possible allowance, as well as to convert into a compliment the steadiness of her first idea.

Mrs. Sarah Earle having been sent for early in the morning, the party set off for Northampton ; from whence to Byram Park there was a distance of only four miles, Sir Edward reluctantly remaining in town to settle his affairs with Mr. Hacombe, who persisted in his intention of going again to the Indies.

Broome met his friends at Northampton,

ton, and confirmed and amplified the communications of his letter. Two o'clock the next day was the time named for the interview with Sir Clifford; Lord and Lady Armathwaite, with sensations of a mixed kind, and Peregrina, with a throbbing heart, prepared to meet the calumniated, the pitied, the respected old man, who with more steadiness than was expected, and with the sincerest repentance for errors, imputable in a great measure to the misguided goodness of his heart, welcomed his friends, embraced his son's injured relict, and blessed his lovely offspring. They remained with him till the return of the family was expected, and it was then proposed, in order to give greater force to the shock of the morning, to impose silence on the servants, who might be depended on, as Mr. Charles Grubb was on duty with his mistress, had not Mrs. Brown been an unfortunate obstacle; how to still her tongue it was difficult to tell, till Broome, whose anxiety for the complete overthrow made him ingenious, thought

of

of taking her back to Northampton with them, there to remain in safety till the next morning.

She was called to hear the decree, for which Sir Clifford's request was to be the only reason given ; but on entering the room, she discovered a disposition far from inimical to the new guests.

“ I have no *dejection*, Sir,” said she, “ to going wherever you please ; but you need not fear me : I knew something was in the wind, and I knew my young lady the moment I see her come up the steps, and my Lord, too, I have seen before ; but as to what is going forward, to be sure it is none of my business, but I see some folks will now have their deserts, and some folks will have their rights ; and I am heartily glad of it, for I have not been well used among 'em—that's what I know. I shall be very glad to be out of the mess, and if I can lend a helping hand,

hand, God knows, I shall be glad to do it—for I have no patience—here's my sister-in-law, domineering over me, just as if I knew nothing of what's what."

"Your sister-in-law," said Sir Clifford, "pray whom do you mean?"

"Why, Lady Jemima, Sir," she replied. "Perhaps you did not know that I had such great relations; but she is my sister-in-law, as sure as God's in Heaven; and as sure as Miss Arabella is Mrs. Grubb; and as sure as that old dog, Lassiter, has made himself your heir; and as sure as Miss Elizabeth wrote to you, Sir, which you never could have knowed; and as sure as——"

"For Heaven's sake stop," cried Lord Armathwaite, half-distracted with her velocity of communication; "a little at a time, and we shall understand better."

She

She then being distinctly interrogated, set forth the whole of her knowledge, to the amazement of her hearers. It was not perfectly clear whether she meant to adhere to her friends *in the long-boat*, or only to save herself from *the sinking vessel*; but she seemed thoroughly repentant, and evinced her sincerity, as far as was possible, by offering to leave her place, and by preferring the removing for the night to Northampton, that she might not be interrogated by her former colleagues.

Sir Clifford reluctantly suffered his new-found relations to quit him: he shed tears at their departure, and obtained their promise to be at the Park, accompanied by the elder Miss Byram, and his old favorite, Mrs. Halnaby, at ten the next morning.

The servants at Sir Clifford's bearing no good will to Lady Jemima and her daughter, preserved the silence enjoined; and
not

not being acquainted with what was passing, began the preparations ordered for the wedding. The ladies, whom their deluded patron avoided seeing on their return home, by going to bed, rose early to decorate; and mama, more as a bride than a mother; and the bride, more like an eastern princess than a *midland country* belle, had approved each other, when they were informed that the Duke and Marquis were come, and requested their company.

Lady Jemima remained undaunted, but Arabella began to feel a little faint-hearted, now that the hour of complete deception was so near. She, however, prudently suspended her cogitations; and, as the person of most importance, swam first into the room, where, to her infinite surprise, she found *grand' pa* had got a large company. Turning about to Lady Jemima, who was

2

close

close at her heels, she whispered, "Who can all these people be?"

"Go forward," answered Mama, who could see nothing over Miss's shoulders.

The Marquis approached to meet his bride; a pause of a few seconds ensued, which gave the last-entered ladies sufficient time to recognise Lord Armathwaite, Miss Byram, and Peregrina, the only persons of the party, excepting Broome, that they were personally acquainted with. The Marquis's flourishes could not attract the attention of Arabella; the Duke's compliments were lost on her mother. At length Lady Jemima, as if fancying a freak of good breeding would be the most useful extrication, pretended just to recollect her brother, and with polite exclamation, feigned great delight at their unexpected meeting.

His lordship was stiff and silent. Miss Arabella, just then come to her senses, skipped up to her sister, who like a monkey watching the next command of his keeper, could only stare in reply. She would next have noticed the agitated Peregrina, had not Mr. Laffiter just then sneaked in, and Sir Clifford made a sign to Mr. Broome, who rose from his seat and said :

“ When I take on myself the function of a speaker, I wish to be understood only as the representative of Sir Clifford Byram, and acting under his direction ; but when I assert the rights of innocence against the usurpations of guilt, I would be believed to speak my own sentiments, and to act under my own suggestion : for all the injury I may appear to design or offer, *I* only am responsible ; for the integrity of my views I take Heaven to witness.”

He

He then, in a manly and concise statement, detailed and summed up the iniquity by which the partiality of Sir Clifford had been gained, while the Duke in a rage called upon the coroneted *manes* of his ancestors, their strawberry leaves and garters, to rise in vindication of his injured honors; Lady Jemima went into hysterics; Arabella endeavored to look bold; the Marquis affected to look grand; Miss Jemima Byram wished to look unconcerned; and Mr. Laffiter looked rather worse, as being rather more cowardly, than Milton's dark angel after his fall. He was perceived casting one eye towards the door, and Broome instantly occupied his retreat, while Lord Armathwaite taking up the cause of his step-daughter, as an elucidating appendix to the preceding narrative, stated the unpardonable hardships she had undergone, and the difficulties and dangers to which she had been exposed, by the machinations of one she had never in any way offended.

Miss Jemima Byram thus becoming involved in the question, and seeing all the sanguine hopes she had rested on a return to her mother, blasted by her equality of evil, set up a genuine blubber, and professing her resolution *never to do tho any more*, endeavored to obtain quarter for herself, and was not easily silenced.

As the last act, Lassiter was compelled to surrender his keys, and direct his enemies to the proper place, from whence were soon brought, the will, together with Peregrina Lamorne's uncommunicated letter, to which letter Lady Jemima had not been privy; and on this ground she declared war, eternal war, against him, as being the only chance of a peace with Sir Clifford.

The will was cancelled. The four culprits were ordered, by the authoritative voice of Sir Clifford himself, to depart with ignominy; and he then, addressing the
Duke,

Duke, expressed his sincere concern for the error to which he had, through ignorance, been accessory. His grace with infinite condescension cast his eyes on Peregrina, and stammered out a hope, that still he might not be baffled in his favorite wish of an alliance with the house of Byram; and even Sir Clifford's eyes brightened at the idea; but Lord Armathwaite declining for her the high honor intended her, the peer by right, and the peer by courtesy, declared themselves, however hurt, satisfied with Sir Clifford's apology; and the one strutting, and the other tripping, they withdrew.

Nothing now impeding the peace and happiness of Byram Park, Broome's benevolent heart dilated with joy at the revolution he had effected, and Sir Clifford felt young and active, while with one hand extended to his daughter-in-law, and the other holding that of his granddaughter, he blessed God with patriarchal piety that he had lived to see that day.

But Peregrina, who could not but feel for the miseries of those whose depression had elevated her, with energetic language intreated Sir Clifford to extend some mercy to them, and succeeded so far, as after dinner to procure permission for a conference with Lady Jemima, whose high spirit required even now a little coaxing : at last perceiving that Peregrina alone had the power of befriending her, she thought proper, with abundance of tears, to confess her forlorn condition, and to declare her willingness to accept, as unmerited bounty, whatever Sir Clifford would vouchsafe, to rescue her and her daughters from the evils of poverty.

She had been fetched from Laffiter's house to hear the tender commiseration of her injured relative : she had followed her husband in expectation of at least sharing his fate ; but he, willing to get rid of all incumbrances, had declared that he would live no longer in a place where his character

rafter was *blown*, that he should go instantly to London, and thence to America; and that the folks at the Park, his wife, her brats, and all their connections, might, for aught he cared, go to the place whence he supposed such plagues came: he had then put together his money, and had departed.

Little less than by this desertion was her ladyship hurt by the conduct of Mrs. Grubb, who waited only the receipt of her cloaths to set off after her husband, Charles having wisely tried to get the start of fame, by setting off immediately, with a plausible tale, to seek a service in London.

After some negotiation, for Sir Clifford shunned the basilisk, Lady Jemima had a promise of her former allowance of two hundred pounds a year, on which, and on an intimation from her brother, that he would not desert her, she decided to retire

tire with her eldest daughter into the west of England.

A letter from Sir Clifford in a few days brought Sir Edward Bergholt to Byram Park, to receive the hand of Peregrina, and with him he brought accounts of the happiness of her friends, in letters from the Blyford and Cottisbrooke families. In a very long letter from Hamilton Courtland, he claimed her commendation for having kept some of Ami Bonange's secrets, and thanked her for the happiness he enjoyed in the sanction of Mr. Blyford, who approving his offer of quitting the army, had made no other objection to his union with Martha.

Thus ended the machinations of malignity in the happiness of those they were intended to ruin, and the oppression of innocence in the total defeat of its enemies, who hating each other as reciprocally witnesses of infamy, were at last,
when

when worn out with discontent, brought to confess, that they could not have been more wretched, had they been honest; and that they had bartered *for nothing*, that peace which the world cannot give, and without which its best gifts are not worth possessing.

F I N I S.

ERRATA—VOL. I.

Page	64	Line	22	dele <i>to</i>
—	93	—	18	— <i>a</i>
—	94	—	20	insert before <i>Byram, Mr.</i>
—	126	—	1	for <i>favour</i> read <i>fervor</i>
—	131	—	8	— <i>unawares</i> read <i>unaware</i>
—	134	—	4	— <i>to her</i> read <i>her to</i>
—	—	—	7	— <i>deepe</i> read <i>deeper</i>
—	150	—	17	— <i>Dominie</i> read <i>Domine</i>
—	216	—	20	— <i>on</i> read <i>in</i>
—	228	—	3	— <i>recurred</i> read <i>occurred</i>

ERRATA—VOL. II.

Page	10	Line	2	for <i>ady</i> read <i>lady</i>
—	15	—	20	— <i>novels</i> read <i>morts</i>
—	76	—	16	— <i>countenance</i> read <i>countenance</i>
—	79	—	12	— <i>Jemima</i> read <i>Joanna</i>
—	81	—	11	— <i>Chatbam</i> read <i>Chartham</i>
—	98	—	6	— <i>to</i> read <i>too</i>
—	107	—	7	— <i>at</i> read <i>it</i>
—	110	—	11	— <i>affection</i> read <i>affetation</i>
—	118	—	5	— <i>he</i> read <i>be</i>
—	132	—	19	— <i>who</i> read <i>whom</i>
—	172	—	14	— <i>folely</i> read <i>wholly</i>
—	241	—	13	after <i>how</i> insert <i>soon</i>
—	252	—	7	for <i>ro</i> read <i>to</i>
—	253	—	2	<i>repeat</i> read <i>repent</i>

ERRATA—VOL. III.

Page	14	Line	last	for <i>then</i> read <i>them</i>
—	22	—	19	— <i>alteration</i> read <i>attention</i>
—	120	—	last	— <i>perceived that</i> read <i>gave up</i>
—	160	—	11	— <i>ipirits</i> read <i>spirit</i>
—	268	—	12	— <i>attacking</i> read <i>attacking</i>

ERRATA—VOL. IV.

Page	44	Line	18	for <i>of any</i> read <i>at any</i>
—	46	—	1	— <i>yet as</i> read <i>as yet</i>
—	78	—	6	dele ;
—	89	—	10	for <i>in</i> read <i>is</i>
—	104	—	1	— <i>who</i> read <i>whom</i>
—	161	—	23	— <i>daughter</i> read <i>daughters</i>
—	201	—	15	— <i>recourie</i> read <i>resource</i>
—	204	—	1	— after <i>Peragina</i> insert <i>reached town.</i>





